YOUR NEW ORLEANS
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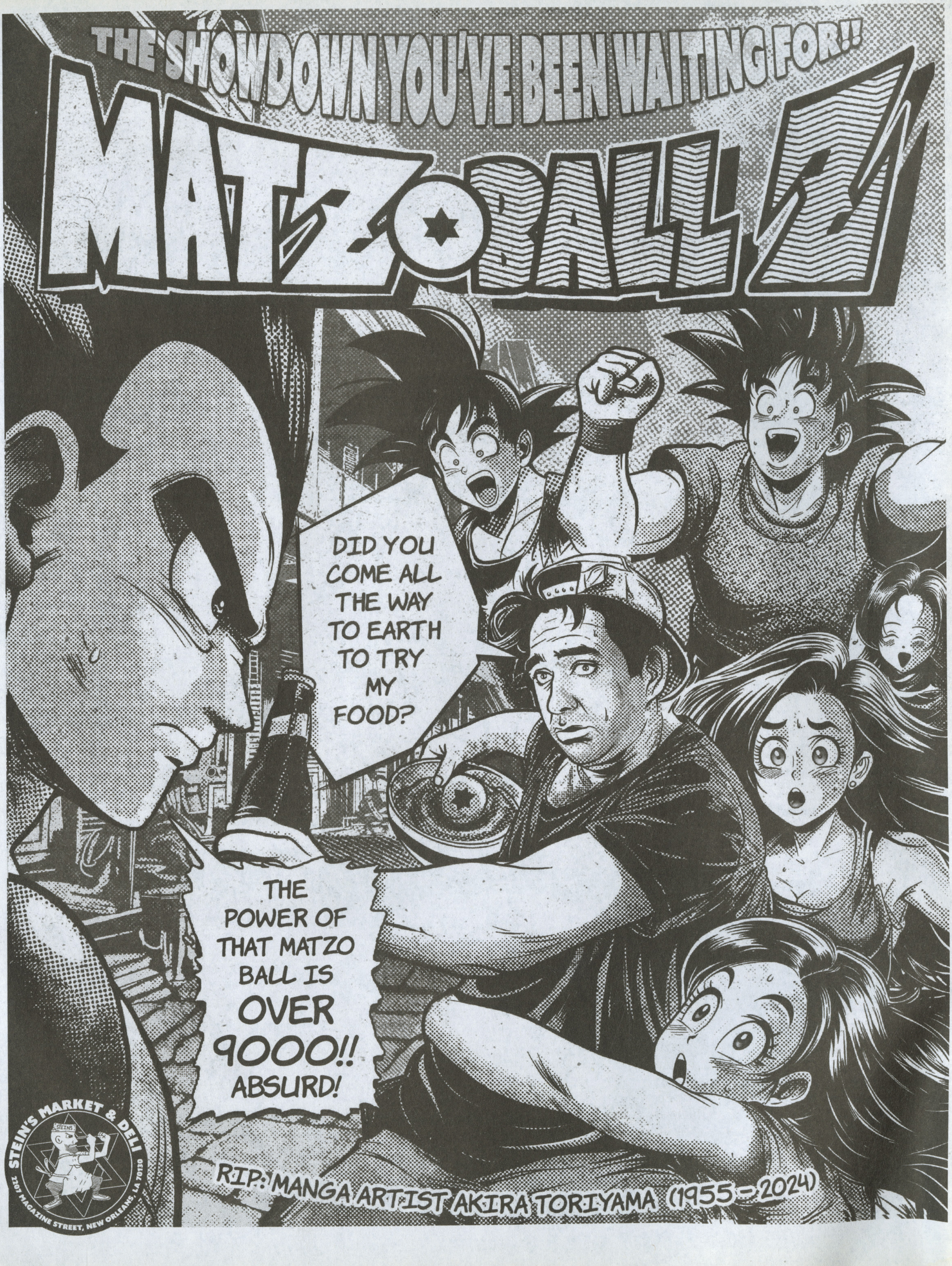
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RIP: MANGA ARTIST AKIRA TORIYAMA (1955 - 2024)

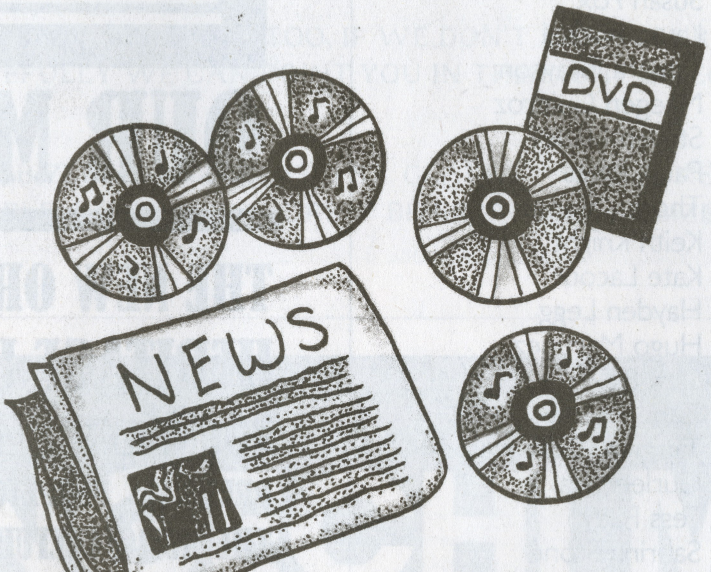
I'm old enough to have known a world where physical media ruled, but young enough that I didn't fully understand the significance of the shift away from it. My mom would help me burn CDs with songs downloaded from LimeWire, and I learned that if I didn't keep the computer very still while burning it, tracks would skip on the finished product. None of these mixes were good, but they were mine—a physical timestamp of whatever embarrassing music I was listening to that I'd never allow anyone else to press play on. I looked forward to buying CDs the day they came out, one year even asking my mom to drive me to Best Buy on *her* birthday so I could get Kid Cudi's *Man on the Moon II: The Legend of Mr. Rager* (sorry, Mom). I listened to that CD so many times in my bedroom, studying the cover art and lyrics in the CD booklet, that those songs have embedded themselves in a deep, unforgettable portion of my brain—a remarkable feat as I become increasingly concerned about my ability to remember anything.

And then before Katrina, I had a shelf full of Disney VHS tapes—all lost in the storm—that I would watch nightly. I remember the excitement of my dad taking my brother and me to Blockbuster and Hollywood Video on Friday nights to pick out the weekend's viewing options, along with candy and popcorn. Picking something out in person, along with a sense of obligation to finish it on a deadline, was exciting. I've always thrived on a deadline.

The transition away from these things did not strike me as worrisome, perhaps due to convenience or simply age.

Around 2018, when I came into the media scene as an adult trying to build a career, digital media was the route. At that time, sites were already beginning to shutter, and the writing was on the wall; this wasn't sustainable, and this cycle would only continue. I poked around, pitched a little, dipped my toes in, but I wrote off Trying To Make It as a full-time freelancer pretty quickly—I'm not a hustler and I like stability.

When I began writing for *ANTIGRAVITY*, having my writing *in print* was exhilarating. Seeing my first little 200-word review of Ezra Furman's *Twelve Nudes*—that I spent hours trying to get *just right*—on the physical page, distributed all over the city, left me giddy (I listened to that album so many times that I ended up naming my cat Ezra). It's an excitement that honestly has not really worn off, despite the regularity of it. Knowing that my writing can make its way into the hands of someone who didn't go looking for it, that it exists outside of whatever insular social media circle I've created, is awesome—in the truest sense. That information can travel that organically still, in the midst of extremely insular algorithms, feels miraculous.



The longer I work on this magazine, and the more frequently I see online behemoths go down (*Pitchfork*, *BuzzFeed News*, *VICE*, etc.), the more righteous I feel in my dedication to print. As online sites shutter, and peoples' work—sometimes whole websites—disappear from easy public access, print offers a welcome reliability: proof that the work existed, that it can be returned to, referenced, studied, built upon, and refuted. This is public record, and it will exist somewhere tangible for as long as its physical form can hold on.

I do not aggrandize physical media simply because I hitched my wagon to it and aim to justify my own decisions. As the streaming wars continue and sites fold into each other, I am further reminded of the importance of independence from monopolistic corporations. Sites like Max (formerly HBO Max, which now includes Cartoon Network, Warner Bros., Discovery+, and more) have started pulling, and sometimes never releasing, their own *original content* from their streaming services for tax write-off purposes. Spotify pays artists fractions of pennies for streams, and even Bandcamp, a platform that has always stressed artist control over their music, was sold—laying off about half of the staff in the process. Moves like this ensure that art gets lost in the ether, inaccessible by legal means, and artists' control over the distribution of their own art becomes extremely precarious.

Shit's bleak. Every week more rounds of layoffs, more acquisitions, more consolidation. As venture capitalists buy platforms they don't really understand, gut them and sell them for parts, more writers and artists lose their jobs and often have to find new careers entirely. When only a handful of people are responsible for distributing news, art, anything to us, they are able to determine what we receive, when we receive it, or whether we receive it at all.

There is precarity all around, and that is by design. It seems as though every corner of life is subject to the whims of very rich people who don't care about anything except becoming richer. A world where people who are actively hostile to art and artists are the ones controlling the distribution of art is a terrifying world to live in.

For my part, I'm trying to take back control when and where I can. I've begun investing again in DVDs and Blu-rays, slowly building back a collection that fell off probably around high school. A few months back I bought a Blu-ray player at a thrift store (most have plenty, and they're cheap) and have been ordering my favorites as I think of them, as well as browsing second-hand stores, which brings with it the same excitement as picking out DVDs on Friday nights with my dad and brother. And lest we forget, DVDs often come with bonus material like deleted scenes and director's commentary—a more nuanced rendering of a work's completion that helps us understand how it was made, and why.

Similarly, working on this magazine every month feels like a way to maintain some control. Here at *ANTIGRAVITY*, after nearly 20 years, we will continue to bring you stories in print, every month—work you can hold, that we will not, and cannot, take away from you.
—*Marisa Clogher*

ANTIGRAVITY

YOUR NEW ORLEANS ALTERNATIVE TO CULTURE

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WILD WAVES

by Taylor Balkissoon

Happy Aries season! Starting on April 1st, the atmosphere will be rife with potential for miscommunication and conflict due to Mercury's retrograde through take-no-BS Aries. Aries season marks the beginning of the astrological new year, and we will spend the month shedding our skins of yesteryear, which is not always a pretty process. The full moon lunar eclipse in Libra late last month likely triggered uncomfortable but necessary changes in our relationships, and the new moon solar eclipse on April 8th will conversely prioritize our individual actualization in no uncertain terms. Both the sun and Venus will conjunct the north node of fate on the 4th and 17th, respectively, marking this month as a time for dynamic shifts in perspective. Who are you outside the gaze of others, and is that person more aligned to your fate than the image you project? Essentially, wherein does your sense of self lie? The challenges in our local community and global society demand integrity and grit, and we will find our place in these movements most easily if we are able to answer these questions. The astrological shifts at the end of the month (the sun's movement into Taurus on the 19th, followed by the full moon in Scorpio on the 23rd, and Mercury turning back direct on the 25th) will culminate in a much steadier vibe, hopefully one where we can slow down and start growing into our new skins.

ARIES

Happy You season, Aries! This month is nothing to fuck with, much like yourself, and the solar eclipse in your sign on the 8th will likely bring major personal breakthroughs. Your ruling planet Mars will conjunct Saturn on the 10th and Neptune on the 28th (both in Pisces). These contacts with outer planets will challenge you to look at things from a bird's eye view and to act with spiritual integrity. This month you will zoom in and zoom out—both lenses are incredibly useful as long as you are pointing in the right direction at the right time. Think before acting, but don't curtail your impulsive nature entirely when your intuition tells you it's Go Time!

TAURUS

Your ruling planet Venus has a lot of action this month—conjuncting Neptune on the 3rd, entering Aries on the 4th, and conjuncting the north node on the 17th. Venus is receptive, sensual, and romantic; but like any energetic symbol, she also has a dark side—temptation, vice, and pride. Likewise, the 12th house is a realm of karma, illusion, and mystery, and thus your experience of Aries season might be colored by a lack of clarity while dealing with Venus' more shadowy attributes. The sun and Venus will enter your sign on the 19th and 29th, respectively—perhaps use the second half of the month to integrate what you have learned about your dark side and demonstrate gratitude for the ways it protects you.

GEMINI

Mercury retrograde can be a funny time for Geminis—your nature is inherently mercurial, and therefore you know how to roll with the punches, and yet Mercury's rulership of your sign also indicates that you feel the effects most intensely. As Mercury and the sun transit your 11th house in opposite directions, things might feel a bit touch-and-go in your social life, or you might be rearranging your value system to meet the needs of the people you love. Make sure that these changes are rooted in personal truth, lest you be led astray by a desire for belonging and acceptance. Gemini might be mutable, but Aries' influence will make sure that you stick to your guns when it's most important.

CANCER

Aries and Cancer are both cardinal signs; you are both feisty and determined, and this can be intimidating to the people around you. While you may prefer to identify with the soft, sweet characterization that Cancer is often allowed, this can also disempower you over time if you don't sink your claws into somebody or something occasionally. The sun's transit through your 10th house this month speaks to your legacy and contribution to society—you have more to offer than nurturance, and Aries season is a good time to demonstrate exactly that.

LEO

After what was likely an annoyingly intense Pisces season, the arrival of Aries season represents a release from your bindings. If there's any sign that is able to cut once without measuring twice, it's Aries, and your shared fiery natures are perfectly teamed for the sun's journey through your 9th house this month. The 9th house is a place for philosophical inquiry and expansion, and you could benefit from boldly defining your beliefs and intentions publicly, in ways that keep you from being projected upon or restricted.

VIRGO

Getting through 8th house transits sucks. You're forced to face your trauma, pain, and shadows, and the rewards, though long-lasting, are often not immediate or even apparent. Having your ruling planet Mercury retrograde on top of this transit will likely make things more difficult. You are made of earth, and earth doesn't transform into stone without significant pressure. The pressure you experience this month under Aries' chaotic, heated tutelage will forge you into something new, and it could be wise to surrender to that process, even when you think you can't take the heat.

LIBRA

Your sister sign Aries will almost always prioritize justice over harmony, whereas you might be inclined to do the opposite. Though both are arguably different sides of the same coin (we can not achieve justice without harmony, and vice versa), the trials that you face in the pursuit of both this month will be influenced by Aries' more direct approach. Libras can be monumentally indecisive, but the sun and your ruling planet Venus' movement through your 7th house this month will demand a direct approach to catalyzing necessary changes in your relationships.

SCORPIO

Aries season is likely to provide you with opportunities for reflection, rest, and restoration. The sun's transit through your 6th house marks a time to focus on your body and capacity, and to do what you can to improve your health. You can't show up in relationships with the immense depth you are capable of if you haven't shown up for yourself first. The sun will enter your sister sign Taurus on the 19th, followed by the full moon in your sign on the 23rd. This full moon will be a good time to set personal goals for the next year. Perhaps make a list of things that will be the most emotionally fulfilling.

SAGITTARIUS

You might not always feel like a true embodiment of fire, or if you do, it is perhaps not with the same brand of impulsive (read: damaging) energy that Aries often brings to the table. This month the sun will light up your 5th house, encouraging playfulness that could border on unruly if you are not mindful of the needs of others. Your wide span of knowledge can be intimidating, and with that comes a responsibility to yourself and others to minimize harm. Thus, this season is a good time to embody your most brazenly kind self by avoiding the pitfalls of ego and focusing on your highest potential as a friend and lover.

CAPRICORN

Capricorn's cardinal nature looks very different from Aries'. Aries energy will start flying without a safety check, and you are much more likely to ensure the plane gets off the ground and stays in the air. This takes more time, more energy, and more sacrifice, but ultimately has more reliable results. The sun and the new moon eclipse on the 8th will both touch your 4th house of home and family this month, indicating a good time to create emotional and material safeguards (boundaries, budgets, etc.) in these realms that provide you with long-term stability and comfort.

AQUARIUS

Your quirky nature often straddles the line between being a childlike imp and a wizened old wizard. The wonder of life is that you get to choose moment-to-moment which you would like to embody. The sun's transit through your 3rd house of play, creativity, and communication will illuminate opportunities for rapid-fire explorations of self. Aries' ruling planet Mars will conjunct your ruling planet Saturn on the 10th, and this day and the days surrounding will ask you to put aside the fun for a moment to focus on your material stability. If you can pivot quickly and deal with your business, the pivot back to play will be particularly rewarding.

PISCES

After using the sun's transit through your 1st house last month to set a course toward your ideal destiny, you will be asked this month to look at what practical steps need to be taken to get where you're going. Your dreamy nature and Aries' impulsive ways are perhaps not the best combination to think practically, and yet you must try. This can feel particularly annoying when the flowers are blooming, and you could easily go stare at the clouds and daydream. If you don't make necessary investments in your future, the full moon in fellow water sign Scorpio on the 23rd will effectively "punish" you by imposing restrictions on your freedom.

♈

illustrations by Anneliese DePano | @fadepano

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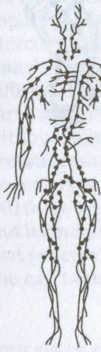

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TIPS FROM THERIOT

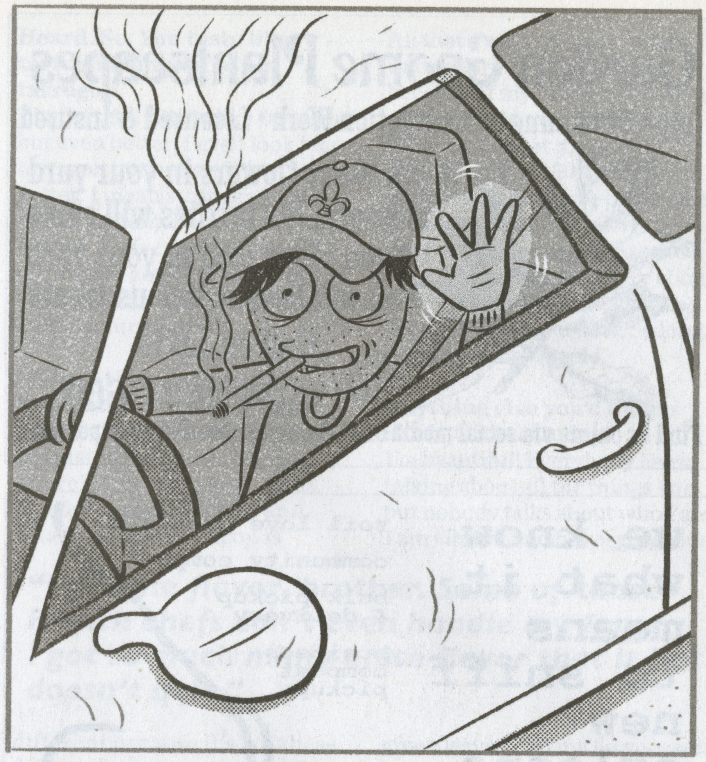
by Isabel Ryan Theriot

It's April, y'all! You know what that means, right? Spring cleaning! It's time to banish the clutter and dirt that accumulated in your home as you hid from the sometimes bone-chilling, damp frigidity that is a New Orleans winter. People have been cleaning their home in the spring since living indoors became a thing. The Persian tradition of Khaneh Tekani, "shaking the house" dates back 3,000 years. Persians believed that the removal of dust and clutter from the home prevented ill fortune in the year to come. In Judaism, spring cleaning correlates with Passover, which commemorates the liberation of Jews from slavery in Egypt. In their haste to leave Egypt, the Israelites did not have time to let bread rise and so ate it unleavened. In honor of the survival of the slaves, the Torah proclaims that only unleavened bread is to be consumed during Passover. A house must be cleaned to remove every crumb of chametz (yeast bread) before Passover begins. In the yogic tradition of Saucha, spring cleaning is done to ensure a clean, non-distracting environment. But spring cleaning is not only a spiritual endeavor, it is often a vital exercise. In the 1800s, whale oil or kerosene was used as fuel for lamps, and coal or wood was used for heat. Valorous attempts were made to stay on top of the grime, such as those that Lydia Maria Child recorded in her 1864 self-flagellatory Drudgery Journal (a diary often kept by women in the 19th century to make sure that they were extra anal and accomplished in their cleaning rituals): "Swept and dusted sitting-room & kitchen 350 times. Filled lamps 362 times. Swept and dusted chamber & stairs 40 times." Yet when spring arrived, a home still needed a thorough sluicing. Neurobiologically, we are more likely to clean in the spring, because we have more pep in our step. During the colder, sometimes dreary winter months, our bodies produce more melatonin. This sleepy-time hormone makes us more sluggish and less likely to clean. Once we get more of that sweet, sweet vitamin D, we're ready to dash the dust. And cleaning... cleaning just makes you feel good! Seeing a task through to completion makes us feel accomplished, thereby activating the reward process in our brain and releasing feel-good hormones such as dopamine. And don't forget, when you're cleaning, you're exercising and therefore releasing endorphins! This April, I wish you the mental, spiritual, and physical peace that a good top-to-bottom cleaning provides. Now for the tips!

What are some interesting cleaning myths?
I want to give a shoutout to my dear, badass friend Reina Rodriguez for asking this question. I love debunking shit, so this is right up my alley.

Myth #1: Pine-Sol attracts roaches.
I addressed this ridiculous myth in the September 2022 edition of Tips From Theriot. This tall tale is hilarious to me. Why would a bug be attracted to a smelly chemical? They wouldn't be. So no: Roaches are not bewitched by this piney cleaner, they are repelled by it. And being that it is a noxious chemical, it is a roach killer. But if you want to rid your home of creepy *Blattodea*, they *are* equally repulsed by the smell of citrus. Squirt a generous amount of lemon juice into a small spray bottle filled with water, and spray your pad—or just place some lemon peels around the house. Roaches will skedaddle, and your house will smell yummy. Win win!

Myth #2: Feather dusters remove dust.
Since most feather dusters are made from cheap, synthetic feathers, they merely move dust around and flit it into the air. Feather dusters only work marginally well if you plan on investing in a duster made with genuine ostrich feathers. Ostrich feathers work because they have millions of teensy filaments that dust sticks to. Instead of a feather duster, I recommend using eco-friendly Swiffer-esque duster heads. Unlike disposable Swiffer dusters, these are made of dust-grabbing microfiber, fleece, or flannel and are reusable. Plus, they fit on Swiffer wands! With these dusters, you're wiping versus gently tickling the smut, which I find more precise and effective. Plus, no ostriches die in the making of them!



The nicotine residue on your windows is called thirdhand smoke, and it's very bad for you.

Myth #3: Vacuum before you dust.
What?! For most rooms in your home, this is quite possibly the stupidest, most counterproductive cleaning idea and, frankly, I'm offended... with a caveat. When I clean bathrooms and kitchens, I always do a preliminary dusting, then vacuuming of the room before I introduce water into the cleaning equation. For if you get dust wet, it turns into a muddy mess. BUT, after I get the nuts and bolts of the cleaning done (anything involving the use of water), I dry the floor, then do a final vacuum followed by the requisite mopping. I'm a stickler for top-to-bottom cleaning, because dirt moves in a downward trajectory as you clean. When you clean from bottom to top, you're basically pouring dirt all over your freshly cleaned furniture and floor as you move upwards. Remember this saying when cleaning: "Vacuum before dust, recleaning is a must. Dust before vacuum, a really clean room!"

How do I remove nicotine from my car windows?
Do people really still smoke? It wreaks so much havoc on your bod and might kill you! Please try to stop it, for I love you. The nicotine residue on your windows is called thirdhand smoke, and it's very bad for you. A study published in 2010 found that when nicotine reacts with nitrous acid in the air it causes the formation of carcinogens. So please follow these steps to remove that oily, stinky residue ASAP. First, you'll want to squirt some dish soap into a bucket filled with water. Grab a rag, dip it in the sudsy solution, and wipe the window. Remove the suds with a damp rag, then wipe with a dry rag. Fill a spray bottle with a solution of half water and half vinegar, spray the window, and wipe it with a microfiber rag. Use another microfiber rag to buff any streaks off of the window. If you still notice any remaining slick mess, repeat the steps above. ✎

Got cleaning questions? Email me: isabel@antigravitymagazine.com

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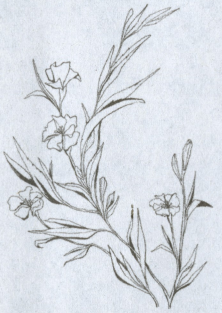
DIRT NERD

by Ian Willson

"LEARN TO USE ME RIGHT"
A Q&A WITH MEXICAN TARRAGON

When I was gifted my first farming plot by Jeanette Bell, Queen Bee of the New Orleans Urban Farming Scene, it came with a massive and decade-old bed of Mexican tarragon, an herb that I had previously never encountered or heard of. It grew on me (as it were) extremely quickly, not only because of its ability to thrive where "regular" tarragon cannot, but also, it's just so vibrant and beautiful to behold, even when it's not flowering. What follows is a brief but piquant dive into the thicket with this underrated powerhouse of the Southerly kitchen garden.



I know I have a tendency to focus a little too much on the names of plants, because honestly, it just intrigues me. I can't help it, I know most of you are tired of these conversations. But you are a really fun case.
Well. It's not all fun though, is it?

Sorry, I don't mean to trivialize. The way you kind of get to be all these things though, in name anyway, that's pretty neat, right?
Yeah, it's certainly not all bad. Maybe confusing sometimes, but mostly not bad. Mexican tarragon because I taste like tarragon, Mexican marigold because I'm actually from the marigold family, and Mexican mint marigold. I have no idea why, that's really not me, honestly. No mint flavor. But the one that gets me is Texas tarragon. Like, come on, Texas. We see right through you.

Oh yeah, wow. I didn't realize that was a thing.
I wish it wasn't but wishes are for fishes and me I'm a plant. It wasn't that long ago Texas *was* Mexico so why with all the specificity? I grow all through the Southern states in the U.S. and all the way down Mexico into Central America. Mexican whatever is fine by me. This whole Texas thing is just a marketing ploy to sell me off to racist white people in the Southern U.S. and I'm not here for it. Not in the least.

I get that, you want us to take it out of the interview? Your whole truth is important, but I don't need to be pushing any backwards cultural agendas here.
Nah, it's fine. I want people to know. Maybe this way we can get the word out and change things. Maybe people just don't know any better. But anybody who's not willing to buy Mexican tarragon but is totally down for Texas tarragon, I don't want a thing to do with that garden.

Heard. So. You taste like tarragon but you're not tarragon.
That's right. I taste like tarragon but even better. I even look like tarragon but better. When I say better, I mean stronger. I got the flavor, brother. Some of those French chefs can't even handle my force, I got so much minty anise flavor that it just doesn't quit. No surrender.

I thought you said you didn't get the mint part of your name?
I mean, I can't taste myself. It's just what I hear, though. There's all these anise herbs, like fennel and licorice and whatever, but tarragon is different because it's got these different minty compounds in it. I've got those too.

> ***"I got the flavor, brother. Some of those French chefs can't even handle my force, I got so much minty anise flavor that it just doesn't quit."***

Tarragon is a huge herb in traditional French cooking, so if you're too potent for them, who are you good for?
Everyone, man! They just have to learn to use me right. In moderation, you know? Half of one of my leaves for every normal tarragon leaf. I have the power, but I know how to be subtle. I've got the goods.

And growing you, how does that work?
Bro, again. The strength, the power, the indomitable will that flows through me. I can take the heat. I can take droughts, I can take intense humidity, I'm here for it.

What about freezes?
Ha. Naw. Nope. That is not me. All that Texas-Mexico stuff uncomfortably defines me because of my capacity for heat, not so much me and the cold. Throw a frost at me and I'll shrivel right up. But the babies I make, though. Those babies will keep on keeping on. Give me a chance to go to seed once and you'll never have to worry about losing me and my kin again, no matter how cold it gets. So long as it doesn't stay cold.

Anything else you'd like to share with us today?
I'm beautiful! Everybody loves talking about all the things I do, but nobody talks about who I am. I am vibrant and full of gorgeous green leaves, and my flowers are beloved by all manner of bee, butterfly, and bird.

So you're saying you're also a great pollinator plant?
That's just another thing I do. Because of who I am! A majestic creature born to wow with my sexy smells and undeniable good looks.

Wow.
Yeah, I know. You're welcome.

Questions for the Dirt Nerd? Email me: ian@hotplantsnursery.com.

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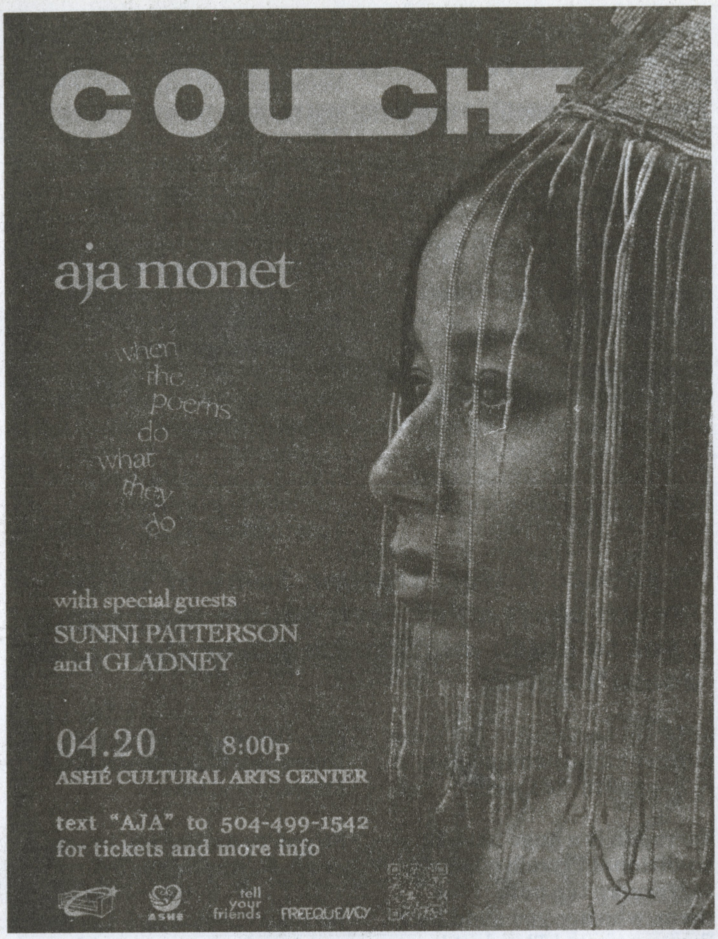

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ART BRINE

by Emily Farranto

Thirteen Kinds of Violence

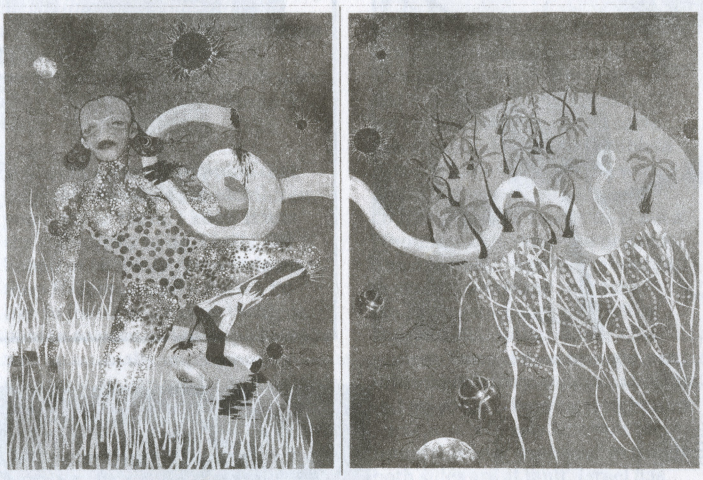
Wangechi Mutu: Intertwined at NOMA

There are at least 13 kinds of violence on view at the New Orleans Museum of Art. A day or two after seeing *Wangechi Mutu: Intertwined*, I tried from memory to count the types of violence depicted or alluded to in the work that represents about four decades of the Kenyan American artist's practice. For years I superficially associated her work with Tony Oursler's, due to the shared aesthetic of enlarged divergent eyes. But, in the years that followed my first exposure to Mutu's work, the artist moved beyond small-scale, large-eyed collages to include sculpture, installation, and video. Her work addresses issues of race, gender, and power in a language that leans on illustration and storytelling more than canonical traditions of art like painting or portraiture. When I view such a sprawling show, I sometimes fixate on one question or angle, a lens through which to deepen or cultivate understanding. I returned to the exhibition with a notebook to get an exact count of the kinds of violence represented in the work.

Approaching the lobby outside the exhibition, I heard a high-pitched noise, a saturated sound accompanying the large projection of Mutu's animated film, "The End of Eating Everything." A woman's head in profile, open-mouthed, snaps at a tiny flock of birds like a dog snapping at flies. The sound, loud to my ears, made me anxious. Sound enters the body and affects its chemistry. In my notebook, I write down **1: Sound-Violence.**

Is eating violence? I thought. Before going further, a definition might help. In her 2017 lecture "Etymological Root of the Word 'Violence,'" Jennifer Woodhull, who teaches in Cape Town, South Africa, defined violence as "a combination of aggression and othering. It's aggression performed on an other. The other could be oneself actually..." The acquisition of food and the act of eating requires violence and othering. We pick and hunt food, we cut and chew, but not our own species. **2: Food-Violence.**

The walls inside the exhibition are painted dark tones and the intricate surfaces of large-format collages seem to glitter in the dim light. *Non, je ne regrette rien*, a large collage, depicts a snake coiled next to a biomorphic form. A single human leg wearing a high-heeled shoe extends from the right side of the form, composed of splattered ink, cut magazines, glitter, and pearls... *Are pearls violent?* These pretty things are taken by force, the oyster violated for its sole possession. **3: Acquisition of Pearls-Violence.**



ROBERT EDEMEYER

Yo Mama, 2003

When I view such a sprawling show, I sometimes fixate on one question or angle, a lens through which to deepen or cultivate understanding. I returned to the exhibition with a notebook to get an exact count of the kinds of violence represented in the work.

However, these are plastic pearls. *Is plastic violent?* There are documented health risks posed by the production of plastic. These include fertility issues, hormonal disruption, cancer, heart disease, and stroke, among others. So yes, **4: Pollution-Violence.**

In *Untitled (Tumor)*, collaged elements create a form with patches of hairlike tendrils. In Margaret Atwood's short story "Hairball," a woman keeps a hair-covered cyst in a jar. I felt a similar nausea looking at *Untitled (Tumor)* as I did reading that story years ago. Are tumors violent? Some tumors take up residence in the body relatively harmlessly while others are cancerous. Cancer, the development of abnormal cells, can plunder healthy tissue in the body. **5: Some Tumors.** Collaged into the mass are cut-out pictures of body parts, mostly women's legs. Is collage violent? When images of women's bodies are cut and left in pieces or grafted into uncomfortable forms, I'd argue collage can evoke in one's body a tremor of threat. **6: Violence of Cutting Images of Women's Bodies.**

"I like this one," a woman said to her young daughter approaching a piece titled *Yo Mama*. The pink background of this large, two-part collage makes the piece seem pretty at first glance. "The snake's head's cut off!" the little girl said as they looked more closely. **7: Decapitation**. A stiletto heel stabs the decapitated head. **8: Stabbing**. Mutu made this piece to honor the mother of Nigerian musician and political dissident Fela Anikulapo-Kuti. Soldiers burned the musician's home and threw his mother, an activist herself, from the building. **9: Defenestration**, the act of throwing a person from a window, a word with a strange and political history.

The next wall is pocked with sores, gouges in the drywall, red and pink. Can one do violence to a museum? What about an apartment building or hospital? A city? The artist calls it a "wounded wall." **10: Violence to Buildings and Cities and Walls.** On the wounded wall, there are eight mixed-media collages collectively titled *Sleeping Heads*. The series was inspired by the 1994 Rwandan genocide against the Tutsi ethnic minority. Is genocide violence? Of course it is. **11: the Violence of Genocide.**

In the middle of the gallery there is a group of sculptures, orbs of differing surface character. The orbs are roughly globe-sized and are made of a mixed material that includes red volcanic soil from Kenya. They represent 11 viruses including dengue 3, corona 1, and smallpox 3. Are viruses violent? Mutu chose to represent viruses that have been "bioweapons of colonialism" as well as those associated with geopolitics and the spread of fear. **12: Viruses as Bioweapons and Propaganda**.

A series of small collages, some of the earliest work in the show, are based on pin-ups, soft pornographic images of nude or semi-nude women. One might not notice at first that the figures are missing limbs, arms or legs, rounded and red. These amputations recall the atrocities of the war in Sierra Leone. **13: Amputations as an Act of War.**

The meaning of the word "violence" began to buckle under the weight of repetition, of all that violence. I was seeing violence everywhere. I closed my notebook. The sound of metal hitting metal can be heard throughout the

cont'd on pg. 40

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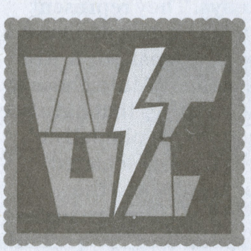

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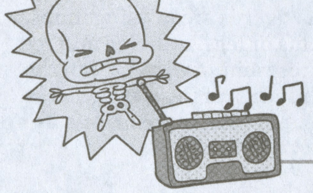

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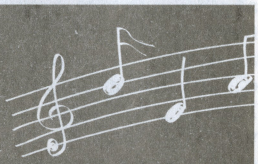

CALENDAR!

april 3rd: return of tulbox at tipitina's feat. brass-a-holics and brass hearts; (18+) 8pm

friday april 5th: punk show at the goat feat. sesher; bullshit machine; and code black (18+) (8 pm)

sunday april 7th: alumni event at cooter browns (21+) (4pm - 7pm)

monday april 8th: trivia at dat dog feat. lefty parker; allison fensterstock; and ziggy the wonder dog (6:30 pm)

wednesday april 10th: tulane vs. loyola battle of the bands in tulane pocket park (5pm - 8pm)

friday april 12th - monday april 15th: 24 hour dj weekend

saturday april 13th: kids show (8 am - 10 am)

monday; april 15th: grand finale (12 pm)

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FOR THE RECORD

compiled by Jesse Lu Baum

Last year, the Port of New Orleans and the Port of Ashdod in Israel announced their intent to form a so-called "innovation embassy" in New Orleans, as part of an Israeli trade mission. Such a partnership has previously been established between the Port of Ashdod (Israel's largest shipping port) and another American city, Newark, New Jersey. The innovation embassy's architects claim that it will be a laboratory for "best practices from their counterparts and entrepreneurship ecosystem leadership. This collaboration... demonstrates the value in exploring locations that pose mutual economic benefit for each other," according to Michael Hecht, the CEO of Greater New Orleans, Inc. Far from being the lone thrust of interconnectivity between two settler-colonial states, in 2023 alone Israel received over $3.8 billion in funding from the United States, primarily for its military; since its founding in 1948, Israel has been the largest cumulative recipient of U.S. foreign aid spending. There is also an intimate connection between American police forces and Israel's military: Members of U.S. law enforcement and Israel's military have participated in conferences and trainings with one another, including Georgia's International Law Enforcement Exchange (GILEE) program in Atlanta, and the NYPD's branch in Israel. U.S.-Israeli partnerships also include technological deals between Israeli surveillance companies and New Orleans' government. Since October 7, 2023, the Israeli military has killed at least 30,000 people in Gaza, and is currently carrying out a campaign of starvation against the people in the Gaza Strip. The following are in-person public comments from the Port of New Orleans' monthly public meeting on February 27. At the following meeting in March, the board cut off comment, then police arrested speaker and labor activist Felix Allen.

I am a resident of Orleans Parish, and a U.S. citizen. I was last at this podium in December, and since then, 11,000 innocent people have been killed by Israel. We continue to see that national and international accountability mechanisms and frameworks are meaningless in the face of extreme adversity, and thus, as with South African apartheid, it is up to us to exert economic pressure on the state of Israel, pressure that is required to end the mass atrocities inflicted on Palestinian lives over the past 143 days. I make the comparison to South African apartheid as it legitimizes the call for divestment from Israel, as required under anti-apartheid law, of which the U.S. is a signatory; which is why the Port of New Orleans cut trade ties with South Africa. Israel's institutional and legalized system of racial discrimination, ethnic cleansing, siege, and prolonged military occupation is in fact worse than apartheid. If you were involved with the Port during their courageous boycott of South African trade in the '80s, you might have heard the phrase *Amandla awethu*. It means power to the people. When I say power to the people and that it's up to us, I mean the eight of you here. The 20 of us sitting here are a conduit to encourage you to do the right thing. End the trade and economic partnerships with Israel, particularly the innovation embassy and the agreement with WSP USA, Inc., an entity which operates in illegal settlements. We are seeing how cities like Chicago are being heralded as heroic for their similar actions. That could be you, and you'll tell your grandchildren that you were a part of stopping that genocide. Because grandchildren, you'll say to them, I knew it was the right thing to do. Lastly, On behalf of NOSHIP [New Orleans Stop Helping Israel's Ports], I'd like to invite you to meet with us, person to person, and explore ways we can mutually implement our demands, so you can be accountable to the community you represent. Thank you. Amandla. Rest in power Tawfik.[1] [Tawfik Abdeljabbar was a 17-year-old from Gretna who was shot and killed, reportedly by either Israeli security personnel or a civilian, while visiting family in the West Bank region of the Palestinian territories the week prior.]

I'm once again here in opposition to the establishment of an innovation embassy between the Port of New Orleans and the Port of Ashdod. As we enter another month of Israel's brutal assault on millions of Palestinians, I'm sure the cruelty and inhumanity of Israel's actions have been made very clear to you all. So I can't help but wonder what it says about you that you're still willing to welcome a business partnership with a genocidal state. According to one member of the board, there's no pay incentive for being on this board. I don't think he realizes that makes this board's position on the innovation embassy appear even worse. So with that in mind, I urge you to reflect seriously on what your willingness to participate in this partnership signals to the world about your stance on genocide, what it signals to the world about your character. And then I urge you to do the right thing and stand in opposition to the innovation embassy.[2]

"We're not asking you to wave a wand. We're asking you not to do business with a genocidal state."

Good afternoon, y'all. I just wanted to address the comment made by Vice Chairman [Walter] Leger at last month's meeting. He said, "If we could wave a wand and solve this thousands-year-old problem of the Middle East then we would do that." I wanted to address a couple of things. First, this is not a "thousands-of-years-old problem." You only have to go back about 120 years to understand that Israel is a European-conceived, white supremacist, settler-colonialist project. I would have brought you my textbook from college to borrow, but my mom is reading it right now. Second, it is deeply ignorant to frame this as a "problem" in which both sides are at fault. Israel has been committing genocide against the Palestinian people since its inception. All the Palestinian people have done is fight back to prevent the destruction of themselves and their families. Third, I want to address the idea that you as the board have no responsibility to help the ongoing genocide in Palestine. We're not asking you to wave a wand. We're asking you not to do business with a genocidal state. We all have a responsibility to fight injustice, wherever we can. In a different time, would you do business with apartheid South Africa? Would you do business with Nazi Germany? Then don't do business with Israel.[3]

You know who I am. I am sure you're tired of seeing me, and I am very tired of seeing you. But I am more tired of seeing fathers hold up the severed limbs of their child or collecting parts of them in a plastic bag. I am tired of seeing mothers scream as they hold up their martyred babies and people crying out from under the rubble. They can't breathe. I don't think you really understand that this is the result of your actions, and part of me hopes that you don't, because if you were really this bloodthirsty, I would be afraid for all of us. If you have the heart to mourn your coworkers, you should be able to mourn Palestinians too. You should not be in power. You should be ashamed. Free Palestine.[4]

I am a born and raised NOLA citizen and I implore you to end all collaboration with Israel. Being that you all agreed to this collaboration with Israel in the first place, I can only assume that you've succumbed to the propaganda and indoctrination imposed on you by the U.S. and Israeli governments. You've heard of Aaron Bushnell, the 25-year-old white male Air Force member who committed an act of self-immolation in protest of the Israeli genocide. He understood not only his role in this genocide, but the volume of his social status in bringing awareness to the cause to ensure that his act of martyrdom, as well as the almost 40,000 Palestinians, was not in vain. I will share some comments from social media that reflect the importance of his sacrifice: "Self-immolation is a product of a deeply sick society, based on deeply sick policies, NOT a sick mind." "It is ridiculous that it is considered mentally ill to sacrifice yourself for a just cause, but it's patriotic to sacrifice yourself for the U.S. military-industrial complex." May Aaron rest in peace and act as inspiration for our movement.[5]

To follow up on these issues, you can email your City councilmembers. To submit a public comment, follow instructions at council.nola.gov. Interested in reading all comments after a meeting? You can email your councilmember or file a public records request.

---

[1] Eliza H.

[2] Christian B.

[3] Felix A.

[4] Helise X.

[5] DK

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The Music and Culture Coalition of New Orleans (MaCCNO) is a broad-based coalition and registered 501c3 non-profit corporation that collaborates with, organizes, and empowers the New Orleans music and cultural community to preserve and nurture the city's culture, to translate community vision into policy change, and to create positive economic impact.

From Cash to Cash App:

A shift to digital transactions has upended the creative economy and service industry

Musicians, performers, and service industry workers have relied heavily on cash for generations. It's deeply woven into folks' lives—declaring cash income for taxes vs. filing W2s, how band members are paid, paying a larger down payment and qualifying for a smaller loan when buying a home, being vigilant when carrying large amounts of cash after a gig—the impact is everywhere. A patchwork of cash and digital applications exists across the cultural economy, with each person finding their own mix of best practices depending on types of gigs, access to financial resources (like a bank account or LLC), and myriad other factors.

The realities of life in the cash economy are generally not considered when economic or labor data is being analyzed, and this contributes to continued marginalization. Like alcohol and live music, a reliance on cash still tends to be associated with negative stereotypes (like drugs, crime, and other vices) by a certain sector of society. This contributes to social structures where those who work in the cash economy often struggle to access various mainstream resources or systems, necessitating a different rhythm of daily life than those who don't. Musicians and service industry workers are used to using cash for everyday transactions big and small, from buying milk at the corner store to paying rent, from having a drink to paying for the recording of a new album.

The cash economy can sometimes mean a lack of formal structure. Bandleaders might pay their band members in cash after receiving just one check for the group, or bands with a changing roster might split the cash from a given gig without ever having a "band bank account." This creates a scenario where financial literacy, specifically lack of access to it, becomes part and parcel with a cash economy, since certain processes and institutions—like opening a bank account, for example—may not be a priority. Lack of credit cards or credit in general can also be a limiting factor. This discrepancy often extends to taxes, as what type and amount of income people choose to declare—or not—means there can be a vast difference between someone's financial reality and their financial representation on paper and to the government.

When COVID hit in 2020, one unintended consequence was the acceleration towards digital financial transactions and away from cash throughout wide swaths of the economy. After the shutdown, cash suddenly became both hard to earn and less accepted as purchasing went virtual, and touch-less interactions became favored in an effort to reduce social contact. In addition, for many still engaged in a largely cash-based economy, there was a sudden and unwelcome reckoning as many people realized that, due to the lack of an accurate representation of their net income, they did not qualify for unemployment or other benefits.

> ***A city like New Orleans, with an unusually high number of workers in the service industry and cultural economy, must figure out how to fully engage those who rely on the cash economy.***

At the same time, digital forms of payment over the last two decades have opened up new avenues of income for musicians. "Digital tip jars" in the form of Venmo, Cash App, Zelle, and PayPal suddenly became ubiquitous—pre-pandemic they were sometimes used but generally not a primary focus. These apps then became almost like an alternate form of a bank account, but accounts that lacked the same intention and tie to financial literacy that is inherent when one makes the decision to open an account at a financial institution. This can then create even more issues around taxation and documentation that may well be unexpected. For example, a bandleader who primarily uses Venmo to accept tips may soon find themselves in a much higher tax bracket if and when the IRS finally decides to implement a proposed policy that would make all income collected via digital transactions automatically reported if the total is more than $600 a year.

The move to digital, no matter how long it takes, has a disproportionate impact on certain sectors, demographics, and industries. Individual venues, restaurants, coffee shops, or other businesses adopting cashless payment systems can create notable barriers to access for some members of the community, changing the dynamics of where people spend their time and money. A cashless business can feel unwelcoming to those who, by choice or necessity, primarily use cash for their day-to-day transactions. If the cashless business is part of the neighborhood fabric or provides a needed community service, it can worsen neighborhood dynamics already warped by short-term rentals, gentrification, and displacement. When asked, businesses tend to cast the choice to go cash-free as one driven out of safety concerns, e.g. to avoid a register or employees having large amounts of cash, making them targets. However, the collateral impact on those who live largely cash-based lives can be stark, as it reduces their ability to use or access local businesses and services, pushing them further into the margins.

Broadening financial literacy—a MaCCNO programming priority for 2024—can help musicians and others make informed choices about their ideal balance between a reliance on cash vs. the acceptance of digital payments. However, access to that information is often not geared to those who have been making their living in cash, who may need it most. This is exacerbated by the fact that there is a lack of information about the cash economy because most of the standard ways of collecting economic information tend not to apply—and the techniques that do work are time consuming and necessitate building a high level of community and individual trust.

A city like New Orleans, with an unusually high number of workers in the service industry and cultural economy, must figure out how to fully engage those who rely on the cash economy. It will be crucial to understand how to preserve the benefits and ease of access digital financial applications bring to individuals and economic systems, while also being mindful of how a societal shift away from cash impacts cultural practitioners. And with ever-growing inequities in society and Louisiana in particular, we can't afford to wait to do it. ♣

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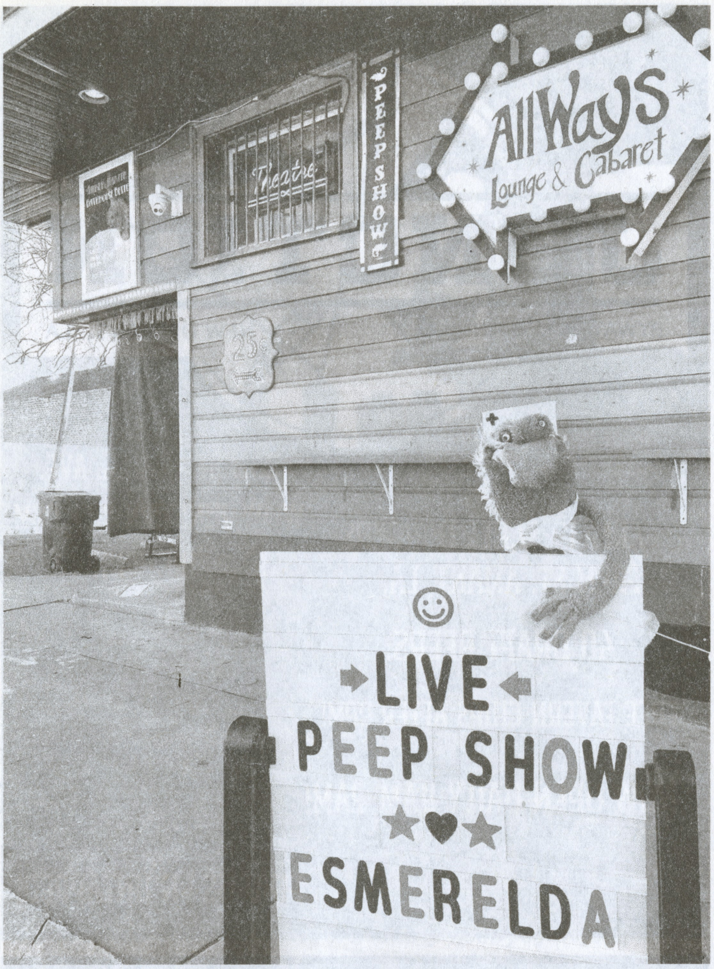

SCABIES THE CLOWN

Above: Esmerelda, ahead of her Peep Show debut, January 2021

Esmerelda the Puppet

From Pandemic Showgirl to Public Health Social Media Star

by Tess Riley

Inside a makeshift venue designed for an audience of one, a screen lifted to reveal a legless green felt creature: part Muppet, part showgirl. The floating arm supporting her seemingly disappeared as she gyrated against a homemade syringe, too large for medical purposes but perfectly sized as a stripper pole for Esmerelda, "the sauciest sock on the block" (as her Instagram bio boasts).

"When you put your arms around me / I get a fever that's so hard to bear..." Donning a nurse costume and lip-syncing to "Fever" (the La Lupe version), Esmerelda performed an enthusiastic one-woman show. Her solo audience member watched through a plexiglass divider, abiding by the rules of social distancing. Esmerelda was inside the walls of New Orleans' beloved AllWays Lounge, as her fan stood within the confines of a semicircular red velvet curtain hung against the lounge's exterior. This tiny performer drew one of the largest crowds at the now-iconic AllWays Lounge "Peep Show," an unexpected foreshadowing of her multi-hyphenate future outlasting the pandemic restrictions that shaped her.

Esmerelda's current engagements range from "Puppet Service Announcement" collaborations with Instagram influencers to her upcoming stage play debut at the New Orleans Giant Puppet Festival. Her manager, David Roston, is the creative force behind Esmerelda's evolution from pajama COVID confessionals to life-saving tutorials on drug testing and overdose prevention. Thanks to his musical abilities, comedic talents, storytelling skills, and public health knowledge, he's been able to translate Esmerelda's signature wit and sass into serious topics, while exploring different platforms. Esmerelda has a jazz single on Spotify (relatably titled, "That's Life"), comedic content on OnlyFans, and a blossoming TikTok presence.

"She's been through so much and she looks a bit beaten up, but I think that's part of her character"

Roston isn't exactly known for his puppet *building*—he constructed Esmerelda in under an hour for a puppet bar crawl in 2019. But her image is instantly recognizable, showing up on your feed or popping over your shoulder at Phoenix Bar. She has mismatched pink and orange cotton ball eyes, a shaggy yellow mullet, and a body made of worn green felt. Her wardrobe ranges from sexy nurse attire to classic cabaret looks, like her signature red dress and fake pearls. Roston still uses the original Esmerelda, who has now survived Burning Man, multiple Carnival seasons, and rave nights at Saturn Bar. "She's been through so much and she looks a bit beaten up, but I think that's part of her character," Roston says.

New Orleans artist and giant puppet builder Henry Lipkis says that Esmerelda represents "the power of silliness," which we all have the responsibility to carry forward. "It cuts through what can feel like bottomless gloom, and Esmerelda doing a puppet peep show in the middle of a pandemic was a very good example of it," Lipkis says. "It's where humanity can come and enter the picture and everyone can feel like they're in on the joke."

The power of silliness has a special home in the grand tradition of the New Orleans Giant Puppet Festival, which celebrates its 10th year this April. Pandora Andrea Gastelum, owner and operator of The Mudlark Public Theatre, is grateful to the local arts community, friends, and neighbors who have helped both the theatre and festival survive hardships over the last decade. "We've made it because people want us to be here and that's an incredibly encouraging feeling," Gastelum says. "And I think that feeling exists because the festival really does belong to everyone."

Esmerelda exists on the endless spectrum of puppetry that will be on display at this year's festival. Her stage play, *Thirsty for the Limelight: A Divine Musical Comedy*, will include human and puppet characters, live vocals, pre-recorded tracks, and countless costumes and props. Roston describes the play as, "kind of like Dante's *Inferno* but with cocaine and puppet divas."

The festival features acts ranging from classical to experimental and everything in between. Gastelum seeks out work that is challenging, innovative, and thought-provoking. She believes puppetry should always "do" something, and that every choice should be an active one. "That is the work that intrigues me and engages me, when I can tell based on someone's approach to their practice that there's thought behind it beyond just getting a laugh or being colorful and eye-pleasing," Gastelum says. Despite Esmerelda's slightly ragged appearance and unhinged banter, she conducts a graceful balancing act. Gastelum says she's cheeky without being cruel, wise without being jaded. It's this balance that allows Esmerelda to tackle taboo and emotionally-fraught topics with a relatability that's nearly human.

Roston's opportunity to combine puppetry and public health blossomed in New

cont'd on pg. 41

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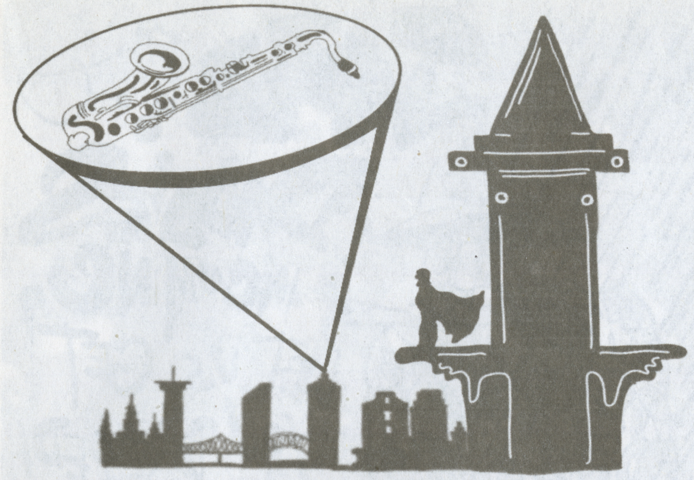


Nocturnal Transmissions

Nine Things I Learned from Reading the Night Mayor's Email

by Steven Melendez

Back in November, in an effort to understand Night Mayor Howie Kaplan's role in controversial "sweeps" cracking down on unlicensed street vendors and performers—and how the public felt about it—I filed a public records request for extracts of Kaplan's official email and text messages including keywords like "sweep," "vendor," "culture bearer," and "street performer."

In mid-February, the City turned over nearly 4,000 pages of Kaplan's email correspondence, from noise complaints to leadership newsletters, revealing more about his $120,000-a-year role as head of the Mayor's Office of Nighttime Economy and other aspects of life in New Orleans. A phone interview with Kaplan—a longtime New Orleans nightlife figure who also manages the Rebirth Brass Band, owns the Howlin' Wolf music venue, and signs his official emails "Sincerely and Musically"—shed further light on some of the office's operations.

The night mayor really is significantly involved in "sweeps," beginning with a crackdown last July on St. Claude Avenue in the Marigny. That, Kaplan told me, focused on public safety after two cyclists were killed in traffic and residents and businesses separately reported a rise in violence and break-ins in the area. Though he emphasized to me that his office doesn't have its own enforcement powers ("I have no enforcement power in the Office of Nighttime Economy—neither me nor my staff has the ability to write a ticket," he said), emails show him receiving complaints from the public, working with other City and state agencies to coordinate sweeps, and using language like "the sweep my office just did." Sweeps have taken place along St. Claude, in the Quarter, in the nightlife districts on Frenchmen Street and St. Bernard Avenue, and along Carrollton Street in Mid City. "Good evening on this beautiful night," he wrote in one email to another official. "At the request of Madame Mayor and the Council, we are putting together a multi departmental sweep to address the proliferation of illegal vendors in the French Quarter."

The City is working with a company called Sound Music Cities to conduct a "music census." The survey, which Kaplan said is tentatively expected to begin with a press conference in April and run for about six weeks, aims to gather information about challenges faced by people in the culture and hospitality industries. "It's difficult to understand how to fix things if we don't know they're broken, or why they're broken," he said. "Hearing and listening to the culture bearers is the number one way to do that." Sound Music Cities counts other cities like Chicago, Pittsburgh, Minneapolis, and Cleveland as clients, and Kaplan said he hopes to learn from their approaches, "be they through public-private partnerships, be they through legislation, it can go through a whole host of factors." The contract will cost the City about $15,000, Kaplan confirmed.

Michael Hecht, CEO of business development organization GNO Inc., is also a DJ. In fairness, Hecht's sideline performing as "DJ El Camino" ("The original hybrid: business in the front, party in the back"), background as a freestyle rapper for a James Brown tribute band, and passion for electronic music were already covered by the *Times-Picayune* a few years ago, and his mixes can be heard on his SoundCloud, Instagram, and DJ website. "Download DJ El Camino here, and get ready to have some funk placed right in your cruck!" writes Hecht. Kaplan addressed Hecht by his DJ name while praising his appearance on WWL, "talking about the sweep my office just did" and its relationship to economic development. "Sending cool thoughts your way," Kaplan wrote.

New Orleans Health Department Director Dr. Jennifer Avegno was passing Ms. Mae's early one morning—a time when the bar is typically more associated with overnight drinkers squinting their way to transportation home than public health—and spotted EMTs administering Narcan there. She stopped to offer employees at Ms. Mae's training on the lifesaving overdose reversal medicine.

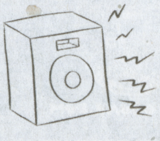
The Office of Nighttime Economy works with City and state health officials to train nightlife workers on using Narcan. "The goal is to have Narcan behind every bar," according to the Office's website. So far, the program has spent about $10,000 to place Narcan in bars, restaurants, hotels, and other sites, and works with health officials to offer training on how to use it in light of fentanyl in the drug supply. "We're not going to sit here and make comments about people and the drugs they do," Kaplan told me. "We'd much rather people be alive, and Narcan is an easy, relatively safe way to do that."

The night mayor's office has looked to other cities for thoughts on how to address street vending. "I think the goal is recognizing that some of the vending that's taking place has been going on forever and ever," Kaplan told me. "You've got the late Mr. Okra, and you've got Miss Linda—yakamein—there's a lot of really great people doing a lot of great things. And I think what we're trying to do is get a better understanding so we can assist these agencies and assist the City Council and the state delegations in how to better navigate this." In one case, Kaplan and other officials reached out to counterparts in New York City after reading about a street vendor crackdown and a study in Corona, Queens. "We just assisted with an illegal vendor sweep along one of our main nighttime corridors (St. Claude Avenue) where illegal vending had started to get a little out of hand and we were looking at some case studies on how we could improve our permitting process for street vending," wrote Michael Ince, deputy director of the Office of Nighttime Economy.

Multiple top officials at the Louisiana Office of Alcohol and Tobacco Control sign their emails with the aggressive message "ONE TEAM - ONE FIGHT," written with varying punctuation, fonts, and colors.

Kaplan's office does try to resolve issues like noise and nightlife complaints through mediation, though it doesn't always work. In one case, he said, a French Quarter resident complained a business held open-door events that "literally funneled this obscenely loud music into her home," and Kaplan was able to help resolve the issue with "a few conversations." In another case, he's working with a Central City business that had been holding unlicensed events to get proper permits. But one Marigny couple, who wrote to City officials last summer complaining of noise, traffic issues, and litter linked to bar and restaurant parklets on Franklin Avenue, appeared to decline an offer of mediation in an email to Kaplan, saying officials had done little to address their complaints. "Given the above facts, and the fact that as a bar owner yourself, who participated in, and benefited from, the parklet program, we don't believe you could be an unbiased mediator," they wrote.

Kaplan was involved in drafting a proclamation to name the members of Depeche Mode honorary citizens of New Orleans around the time of their October concert at the Smoothie King Center. "With commendation for the body of work you've created over the last 43 years, your dedication to your craft and devotion to being a culture bearer is truly worthy of this honor," reads a draft sent by Kaplan to another official. It's unclear if the British new wave band ultimately received the honor, but Kaplan emphasized to me the role of touring artists, as well as local acts, in bringing visitors to New Orleans. "Our content creators are the best in the world," he said. "Our culture bearers nobody can match. And that's the reason why artists would love to come to New Orleans."



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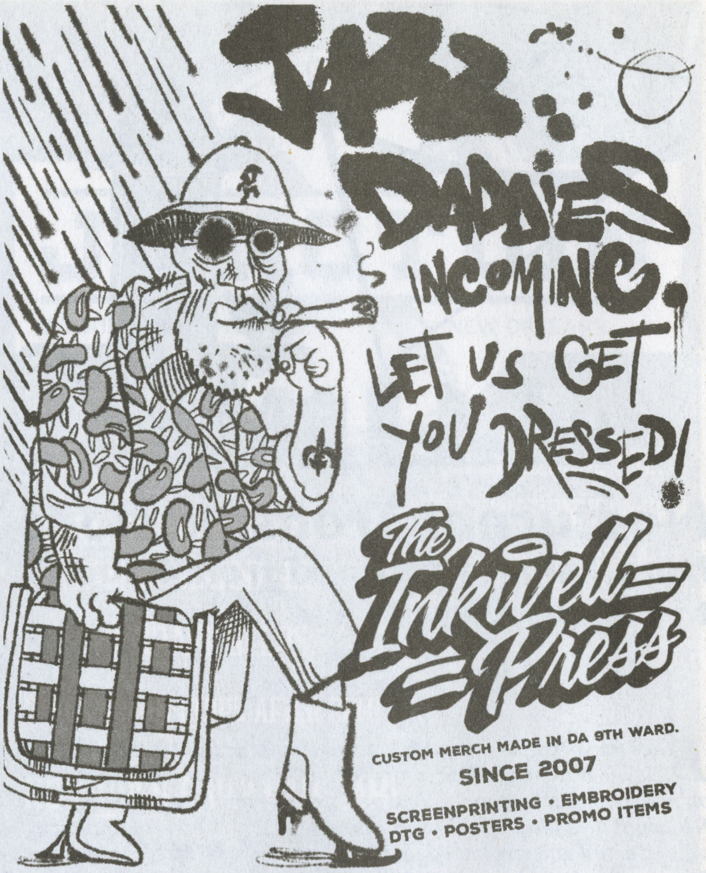

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7	8	9	10	11	12	13
TBA	KARAOKE W SUNSHINE	CONAN PYSCHIC TRASH WIZARD DICK		UPSTAIRS TAINTED LOVE 80'S NIGHT ZITA QUARTZ	GUCCI BLACK	2 FLOORS! OF MUSIC FREQUENCY
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
TBA	KARAOKE W SUNSHINE		FROM THE U.K. BLACK KAT BOPPERS BECKY LYNN BLANCA THE MAYHAWS	TAINTED LOVE 80'S NIGHT	UPSTAIRS HIDDEN CHARMS OC/DC OTTO'S ROCK NIGHT	SOFT KILL GUMM LIBERTY & JUSTICE
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
LACUNA PRESENTS	KARAOKE W SUNSHINE		BLANKSLATE CHLOE MARIE LYLA DIPAUL	UPSTAIRS TAINTED LOVE 80'S NIGHT MORTUOUS CEMETERY FILTH SWAMPGRAVE	ZITA WSG TBA	UPSTAIRS FRIENDZONE RECORD RELEASE 007
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
TBA	KARAOKE W SUNSHINE	VISIT HOLY DIVER	SWEEPING PROMISES W TBA	UPSTAIRS 10PM TAINTED LOVE 80'S NIGHT CLUB	UPSTAIRS RESURRECTION KROOKED KINGS	NOLA DNB

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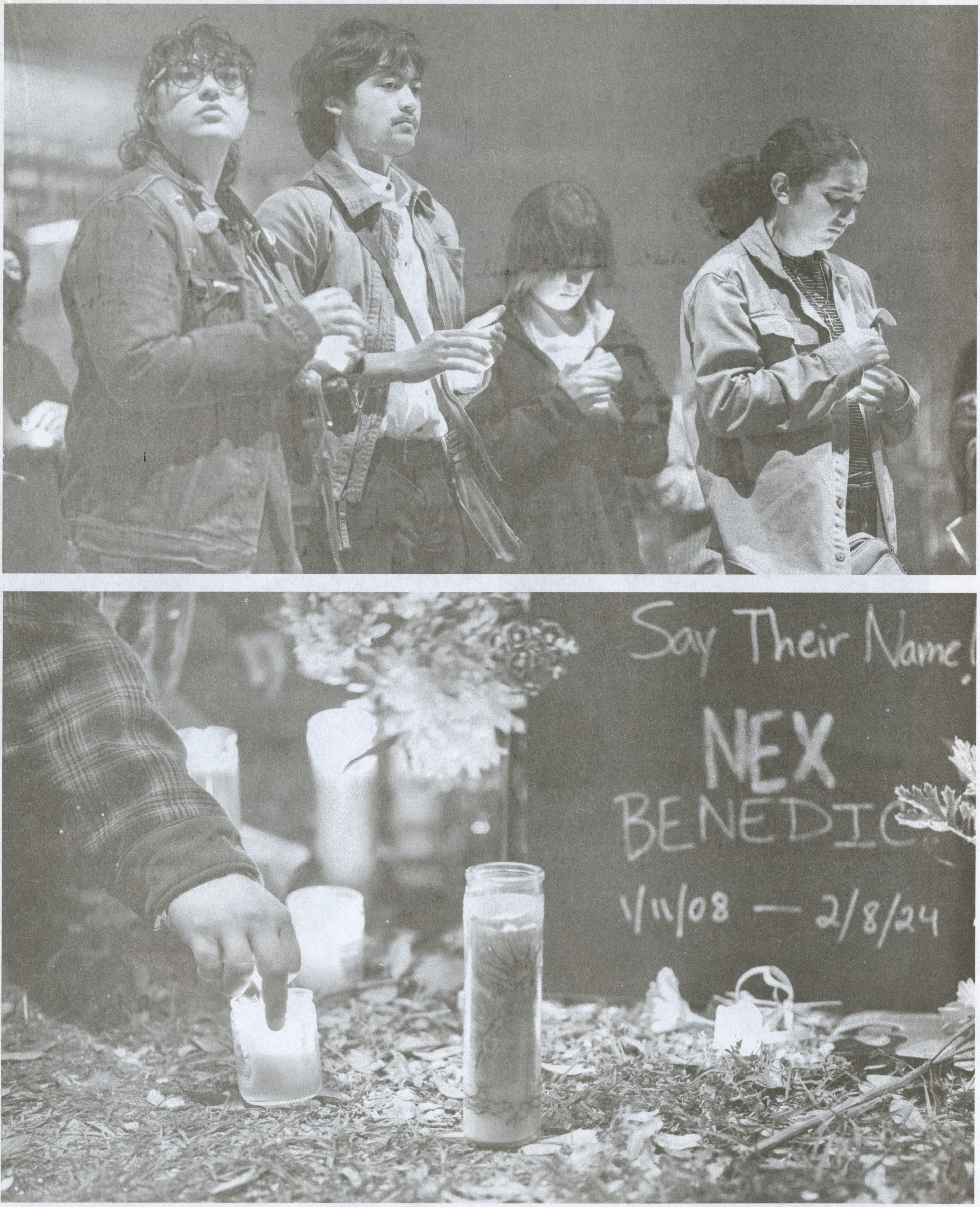
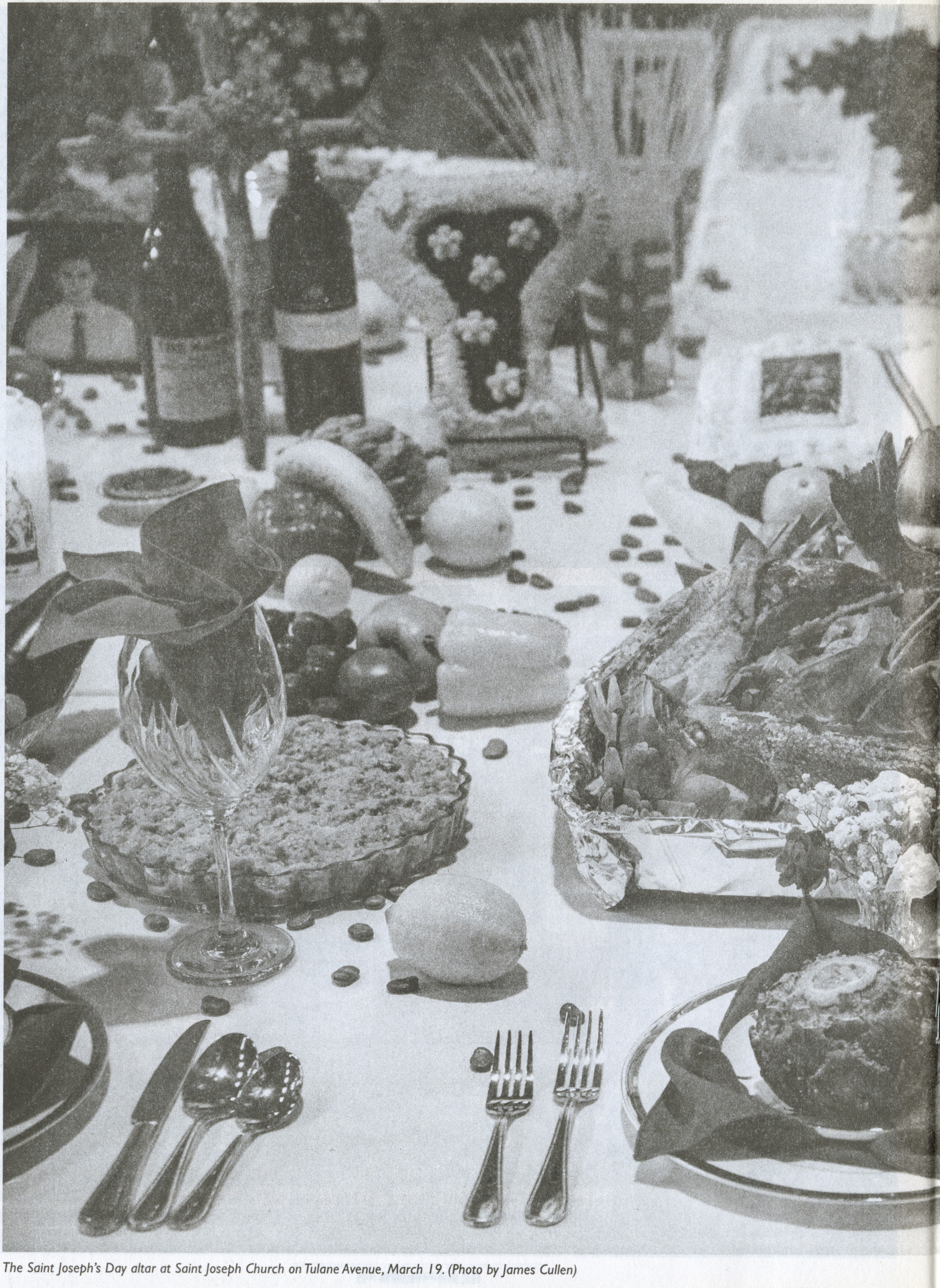
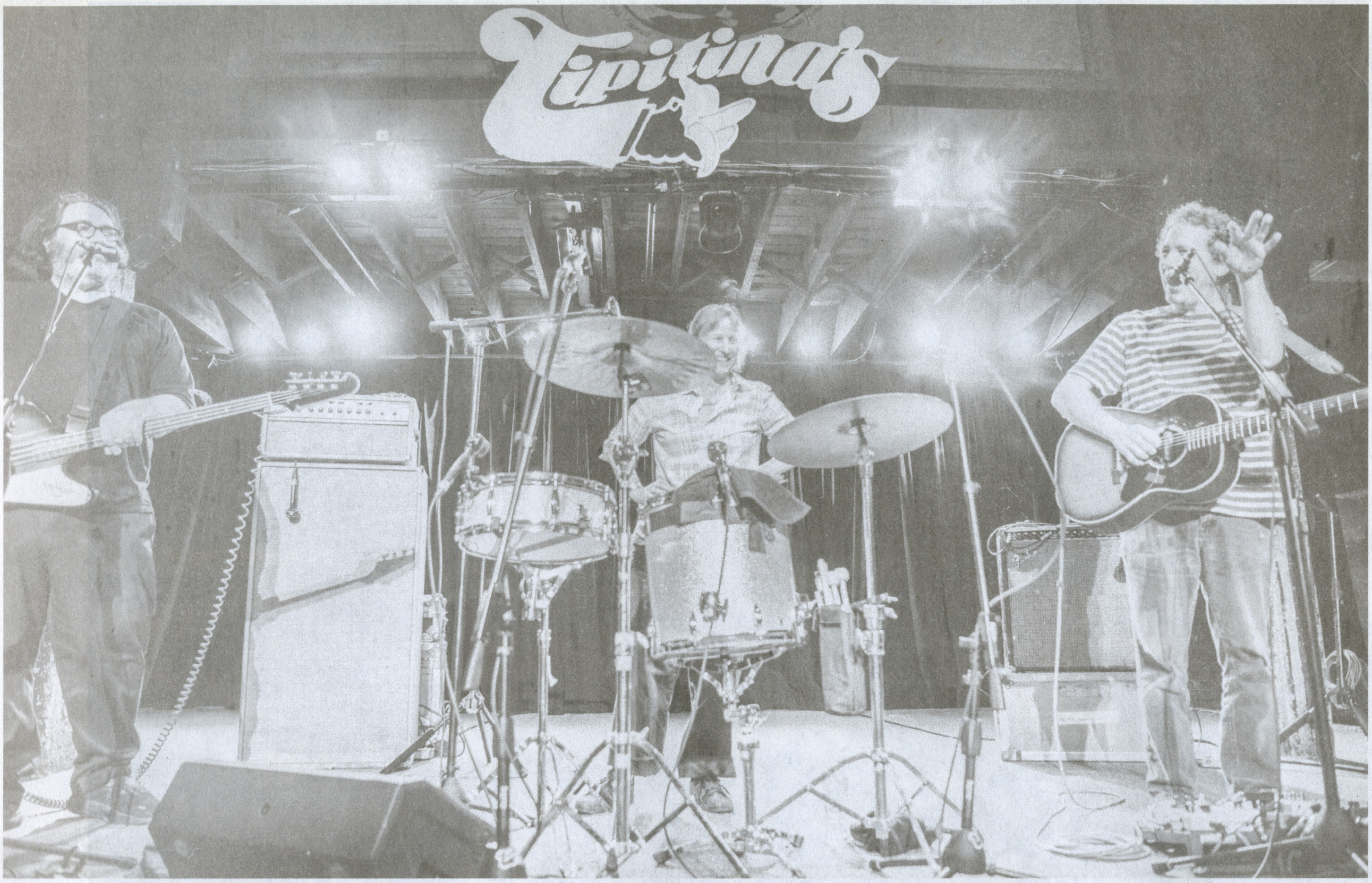


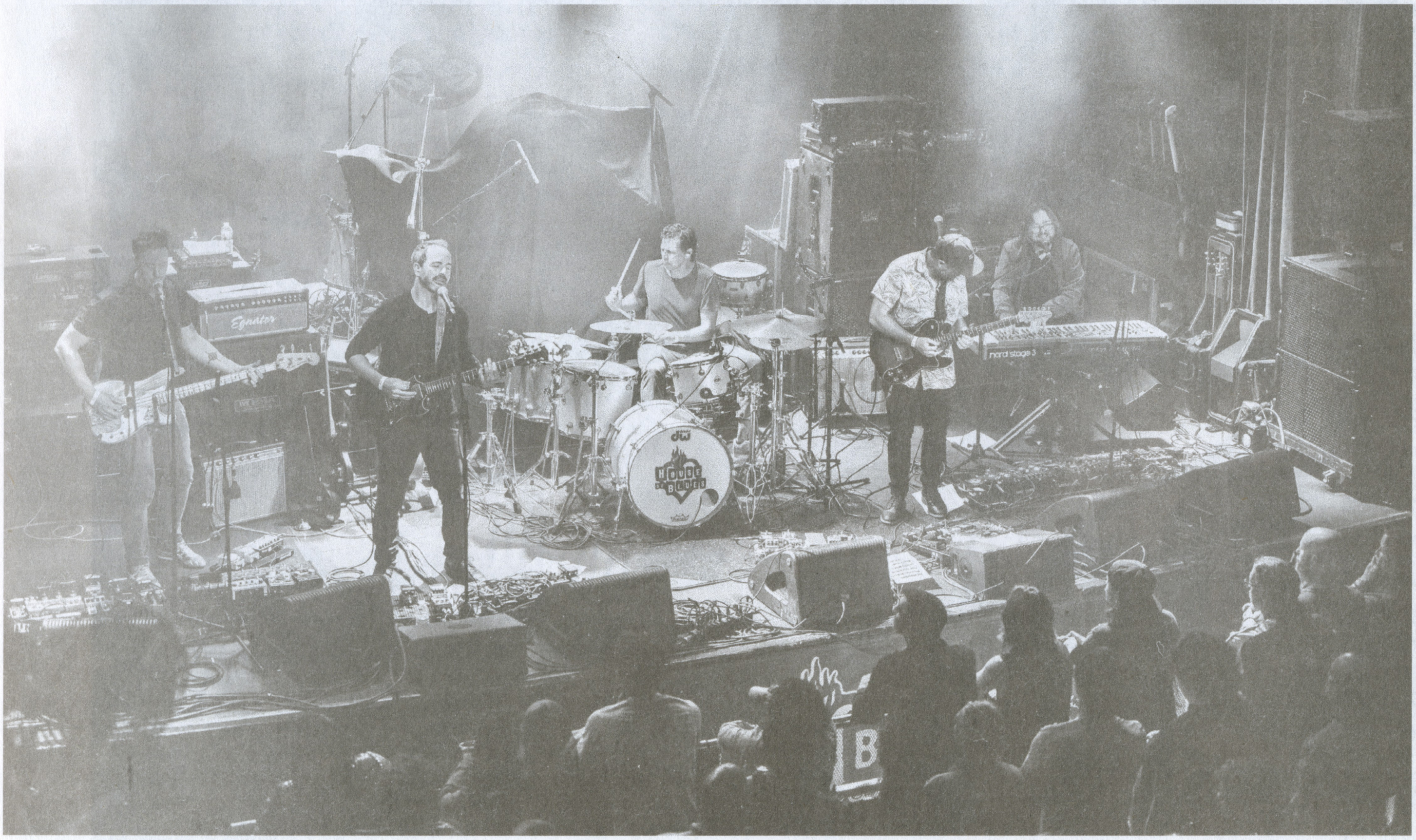
Mourners hold a candlelight vigil on February 29 for Nex Benedict at the Greenway Station on Lafitte Greenway. Nex Benedict was a 16-year-old non-binary student from Owasso, Oklahoma, who died the day after an alleged fight in a bathroom at their high school. According to their mother and friends, Nex experienced bullying from students due to their gender identity for more than a year before their death. The vigil was hosted by the New Orleans Pride Center to honor Benedict and allow others to share their stories. (Photo by Hayden Legg)



The Saint Joseph's Day altar at Saint Joseph Church on Tulane Avenue, March 19. (Photo by James Cullen)



Yo La Tengo performs at Tipitina's on February 27 during their This Stupid World tour. (Photo by Tamara Grayson)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The Bottoms open for legendary rock band Living Colour at House of Blues on March 6. (Photo by Katie Sikora)

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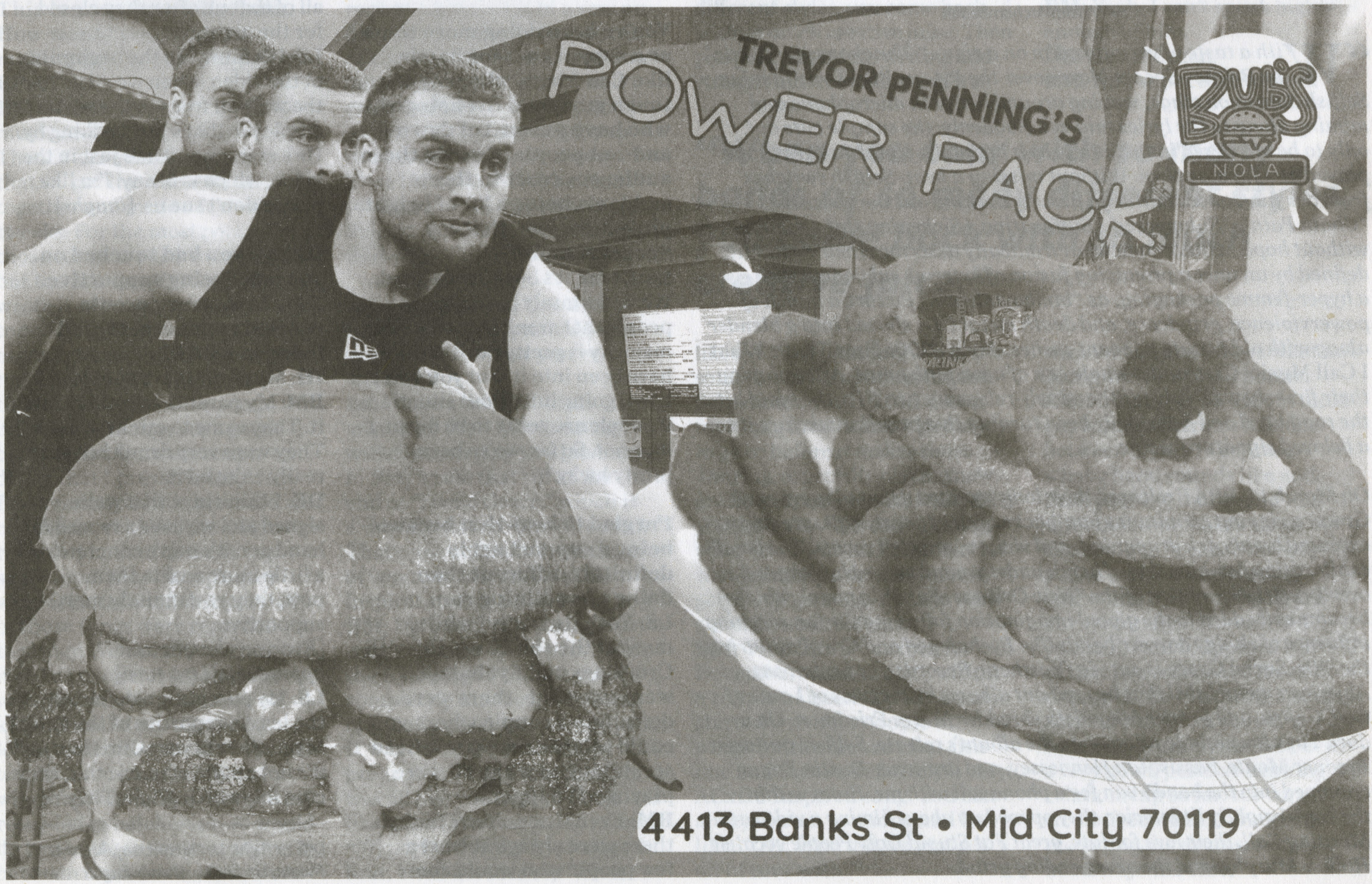

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Left to Right: Ian Hennessey, Brenner Moate, Liz Selfish, Dustin Eagan

BRAT

Gritty in Pink

by William Archambeault

“With a taste of your lips, I’m on a ride...” The chorus to “Toxic” by Britney Spears blares over the P.A. as BRAT vocalist Liz Selfish dances on stage, waving around her pink microphone and miming along to the lyrics mid-set. Suddenly, the sample cuts out, only to be answered immediately by a barrage of loud guitar riffage played at a furious pace. Without missing a beat, Selfish switches from her fun dance routine to fiercely barking out the lyrics to “Chain Pain”: “Submerged / Suffocating / Sickening shit / A home without hope.” BRAT somewhat ironically describes their aesthetic, defined by an uncompromising fusion of extreme subgenres with a hyper-femme packaging, as “bimboviolence.” Picture a bunch of powerviolence, grindcore, and death metal CDs shoved into a blender along with old beauty pageant sashes, early 2000s Now That’s What I Call Music! *CDs, and a whole can of neon pink paint. After playing their first show in July 2021 and self-releasing two EPs, the band hit the road hard and has slowly been turning this peculiar mixture into a beloved signature recipe.*

On March 15, BRAT released their long-awaited debut album Social Grace, *a ripping 20 minutes jam-packed full of gnarly riffs, precisely executed breakneck drumming, and vicious, growled vocals. The band’s exhilarating combination of harsh underground styles challenges the overly restrictive notion of the “New Orleans sound” in metal, which became embedded in the global imagination following the far-reaching influence of sludgy downer bands like Eyehategod and Crowbar during the ‘90s.* Social Grace *is out via Prosthetic Records, the prominent American metal label that has put out albums by the likes of Lamb of God, Gojira, and former Megadeth shredder Marty Friedman. On a dark Tuesday night leading up to the album’s release, Selfish, guitarist Brenner Moate, bassist Ian Hennessey, and drummer Dustin Eagan crammed into the band’s van for a phone call with me. From within the van’s brightly lit interior, they opened up about filming a video at Morning Call, their love for late, great Fat Stupid Ugly People vocalist Hollise Murphy, and the never-ending grind.*

Y’all got off tour a few days ago. How was this last run you did?
Liz Selfish: It was the best one yet.
Ian Hennessey: The best and the worst.
[*Brenner Moate laughs*]
LS: The worst?
Dustin Eagan: The worst for Henny.
LS: Wait, why? Oh, because you lost your shit. You can tell him your story.
Brenner Moate: He had an unfortunate mishap, losing his suitcase with all his clothes.
LS: He’s traumatized. [*awkward silence followed by laughs*] I guess he doesn’t want to talk about it.

Y’all coined the term “bimboviolence” for the band’s aesthetic. What inspired bimboviolence and how do you describe that aesthetic?
LS: Well—
DE: You’re the bimbo. [*laughs*]
LS: Just with the pop samples that we use and the band name and everything—and obviously with it being a play on powerviolence, I thought it was funny and it fit well for what we are doing.

You’ve been doing more tours as a support act for bands like Cro-Mags, who play to tough guys, and Eyehategod, who have a crowd of down-and-out people. How do those audiences react to there suddenly being a lot of bright pink and a loud Britney Spears sample?
LS: So far, it’s been really good. We’ve certainly had some people that aren’t into it but the majority is pretty positive and have been into it. But you don’t know going into those situations if people are going to be digging it or not. So far, we’ve been pretty lucky.

I’m glad to hear that because being a support act is definitely different than doing a headlining run.
LS: Yeah. It is. And while most of the shows we did with Cro-Mags and Eyehategod were awesome, there were definitely a couple where you could tell the crowd was head scratching to what we were playing. It happens.
BM: Even those shows though, there were always at least a few people who would come up to us after and tell us how much they enjoyed it. It’s never universally bad.

Y’all made the music video for “Hesitation Wound” at Morning Call. Whose idea was that and how did you pull off making a video at such an iconic New Orleans spot?
IH: It might’ve been my dad’s idea. It’s my family’s spot and I’ve been working there my whole life behind the cash register and stuff, so it just felt natural.

What was it like logistically, trying to pull that off?
IH: We just did it on a Monday or a Tuesday when it was kind of slow. They were still open. We filmed everything we could with them being open and we just waited until they closed down and did it in the middle of the night.
DE: We were definitely getting some looks from the guests while hauling in instruments.
BM: All of the shots in the beginning, the setup shots and stuff and us doing staff duties and stuff like that were all while it was open. But we had to do the shots with the whole band playing after it closed. So we set all of that up after they closed for the night.
LS: It’s funny. In the beginning of the video, when we all go to the walk-in freezer, there’s an employee that’s just walking by. He’s at work and he’s just in the video, which is funny. I’m like, please don’t sue us. [*laughs*]

Henny, you had touched on your dad being supportive. How have your parents reacted in general to y’all being in BRAT?
IH: My parents are cool.
BM: My parents are pretty into it. They came to our first show. They were very drunk but they really enjoyed it.
DE: I think now that we’re signed and we have a record in hand and it’s more concrete, a little more real to them now, they’re definitely more supportive.
[*Everyone laughs as it approaches Liz’s turn*]
LS: My parents are definitely the least supportive of the band. My mother is very Christian and it’s not a style of music that they care for, which is fair. They’re

maybe getting a little bit more supportive, *maybe,* now that, like Dustin said, we're signed and they're seeing that it's a little bit more legitimate. I would not say they're stoked on it.

I want to talk about the music video for "Social Grace," in which you kill Carl [Elvers, underground scene legend and past *AG* contributor]. Tell me about the inspiration behind that and putting it together.
LS: I pretty much had a vision that I wanted to do something with a Clue vibe to it. We took inspiration from that with this whole rich people in this big house, murder-mystery vibe where we killed Carl. Rest in peace.

Still from the "Hesitation Wound" video

It was nice to see Carl in the video.
DE: We love Carl.
BM: We wanted him in our first video [for "Grime Boss" and "Total Rust"] but he couldn't do it that day and we ended up getting [Thou vocalist] Bryan Funck instead.
DE: Yeah. We had to settle for Bryan Funck. [*laughs*]

This is your first full album. How would you contrast making this to the two prior EPs?
BM: The first two EPs, I pretty much wrote during lockdown. Then it was almost a year later that we got the whole band together and made a few minor tweaks. For the most part, those songs are as I wrote them, but the full-length record, we wrote it as having a whole band together so it comes out a lot more dynamic because everyone has a part in it. I still wrote the rough drafts of the songs, but the final songs are a good bit different than the rough drafts that I presented at first. It's definitely a little bit more collaborative. Also, the EPs, we recorded both of those at the same time. Even though they were released months apart, all of those songs were recorded together. We wanted to space it out as two releases since we were just starting, because we knew it would probably be a long time before the first album would come out. And that's what happened. The record was recorded in batches, so we would do two or three songs at a time in between tours because we were touring a lot. We didn't want to take a bunch of time off to write and record all of these songs all at once, so we did it when we could, essentially. It was over the course of about a year.
DE: It worked out better that way, because when you go to record eight songs in a row on drums, you tend to lose focus of the details because you don't have as much time to spend on them. But if you do two or three songs at a time, you can really hone in on every little thing and it's a lot less pressure. I think it definitely helped make a better outcome that way.

How has playing live and touring a lot impacted your approach to what you're writing?
LS: I have a little bit of an answer to that. After touring with Eyehategod, you [*pointing to BM*] wrote that riff at the end of "Social Grace," which is a very Eyehategod inspired riff. That's one example I can think of where we definitely pulled inspiration from that tour.
BM: Definitely. That song was written for the most part before the Eyehategod tour. It wasn't completely finished, but it was originally a fast two-steppy part. It was the same exact chord progression and everything. It was all like you hear it, but it was like a fast [*starts scatting speedy riff*] part. After the Eyehategod tour, I had the idea of, "What if we just slowed it down and played it really slow?"
LS: "What if we went Eyehategod mode for a second?" [*laughs*]
DE: It's definitely an homage in a way. But when you tour with so many bands of so many different styles, you come back with so much creative juice. Then you go straight into writing and straight into recording and it's like catching lightning in a bottle sometimes. Sometimes, it's not. Sometimes, you'll sit on a song for a long time before it's ready to go or before it makes sense. Touring, especially playing new music with new bands, really fills you with a lot of creative energy when you come back. I think that was definitely a driving force in getting those songs done in such a short amount of time.

> **"When you tour with so many bands of so many different styles, you come back with so much creative juice."**

BM: Yeah. After our tour in December with ACxDC, within a couple of weeks I had already started writing a couple of songs for the record after this one and there's definitely a very ACxDC inspired song. You can always listen to a song and be like, "OK. Who did we just get off of tour with?"

All of the band's output has been recorded with James Whitten over at HighTower Recording. Can you speak a bit about what it's been like working with him?
DE: It's the best. It's the fucking best.
BM: Yeah. I can't speak highly enough of him.
DE: He's the man.
BM: He's super easy to work with and he just knows what he's doing and he's just a homie.
DE: He's also done a lot to mold our sound. There's a balance between trying to capture what a band sounds like and then pushing that sound in a direction that makes sense in a recording, because the way you sound live and the way you sound on a recording are always totally different, but you still want to capture some of that live essence as far as the energy in the recording and also actual sound, like the guitar tone and drum tones. It's been a very good, positive working relationship so far. It's very stress-free when it comes to recording the drums, which is not always the case.

RODRIGO DELGADO

Social Grace *release show at the Free Store, March 23*

How did y'all wind up linking up with Prosthetic Records?

LS: They actually reached out to us pretty early on during our second tour.

BM: It was the Schmuck tour. It was the day after we played Charlotte, North Carolina for the first time.

LS: It was within the first year of us being a band. We were on our second tour and we were still DIY booking, just us. They reached out to us and, at that point, we weren't really interested in working with a label yet because we wanted to have a booking agent first and do support tours and get a little bit more established before going to look for labels. We held off on that for like a year and then we wrote the record and decided we wanted to shop it and see if there was a label that we would be interested in working with, that would be interested in working with us. We got a few people, but Prosthetic was definitely the one that was the best for us. We just revisited it a year later.

Y'all went from self-releasing your first two EPs to now being at a point where I can pre-order an import via Tower Records in Japan, which seems wild.

LS: That's crazy. That was actually a big factor of why we wanted to go with Prosthetic, is because they have international distribution and know that our record is in Japan. That was a big point in our decision making.

The record is dedicated to the late, great Hollise Murphy. I want y'all to speak a little bit about how Hollise impacted you as musicians and as people too.

LS: Hollise was the mayor of New Orleans. He's what you think of when you think of New Orleans metal and punk. All of us have known him for a long time and knew him as just the most positive and welcoming person that anyone has ever met.

BM: He was there at our first show. It was a special thing. He was the first person to ever get a BRAT shirt as well. A couple weeks before he passed, he hit us up before the first show and was like, "Let me get one of those shirts." I met him outside of St. Roch [Tavern], I think, and we hung out with him for an hour on the sidewalk, just chatting. He was also like the first BRAT fan, essentially, so we just wanted to show our appreciation for him on the record.

IH: I wouldn't be who I am without Hollise. He's my dog.

BM: Just his devotion to the scene is the best way that I could put it.

DE: I probably knew Hollise the least personally just because I used to come to shows in New Orleans when I was young, but I pretty much joined BRAT right after I had moved here during the pandemic. So I didn't get a lot of hangout time with him at shows, but I remember seeing him at shows, being a big guy, shirt off in the pit. As a big guy, it gave me a lot of confidence that I belong in this space and this is where I should be, and that this is a good community to be in.

> **"My mental health is the best it is whenever I'm on the road. It's when I'm at home when it is a problem."**

BM: Whatever show you were at that Hollise showed up at, you were like, "OK. I'm at the right show." It was just always that feeling.

Dustin, I can definitely relate to what you're saying as a slightly bigger guy myself. I remember being in high school, seeing Eyehategod play in Paul Webb's instrument shop and going, "Who the hell is this guy? He's going insane!" [*everyone laughs*]

I remember seeing Brenner and Henny play in groups for years before BRAT started. How did playing in those groups help lay the groundwork for what you're doing now?

BM: Playing in bands and being on tour and all of that stuff are just skills and etiquette, all these little nuanced things that you learn over the years. Going into a band knowing how to do all of those little things just helps make everything else so much easier.

IH: I've been on tour a bunch since I was 19 or 20. It just gets easier the more you do it, I guess.

As you guys do more tours, how do you balance taking care of your mental health and yourselves with playing shows and the real work that goes into it?

DE: That's very hard.

IH: I just bring the Nintendo Switch on the road. [*laughs*]

LS: What is Henny's version of self care? I would love to know. A nice steak? [*laughs*]

IH: I'm playing some *Skyrim*. That's therapy.

LS: [*imitating IH*] That's therapy, brother. [*laughs*]

STEVEN HATLEY

Community Records' 15 Year Anniversary Block Party at Tipitina's, June 24, 2023

BM: Thankfully, we're staying in hotels most nights at this point so I like to hit the hotel gym when I can. That's always nice. I also bring my Switch and find time for that when I can. Honestly, my mental health is the best it is whenever I'm on the road. It's when I'm at home when it is a problem. Being on the road is great for that.

DE: We all get sick.

LS: Yeah. Physical health is the hard part on tour.

> ***Whatever show you were at that Hollise showed up at, you were like, "OK. I'm at the right show."***

DE: There's been a hard learning curve—learning how to tour properly—because there's no user manual for this shit. I got real sick early last year on tour and I was hospitalized. That was a huge learning tour and still every tour is different, so you have to be prepared: What weather are we going to be in? What are the sleeping conditions going to be like? You have to be prepared for everything. It's tough, it's taxing, but as long as you learn and take steps to do it better every time it's getting easier and easier. But still every time we go on tour, we just get sick, especially in the winter. The summer's usually not too bad.

Liz, your vocal style feels very intense. How are you able to keep that up night after night when you're doing a two or three week long run?

LS: The first couple tours we did, I really struggled with it. I realized it was because I wasn't practicing every day. To be able to do it every day on tour, you have to be able to do it every day at home, so now I practice the set pretty much every day. It's normal for me now to just do it on tour every day. It's still a little bit hard because even when you're practicing by yourself you're not putting quite as much *umph* into it as you are when you're doing it live, but definitely my voice can handle it a lot more now than it could at the beginning.

People who aren't part of the New Orleans underground scene have commented to me about the band and oftentimes they'll mention your really intense vocal presence. Could you speak a bit about finding your style and if there were any people in particular who were big inspirations when you were trying to mold your respective style?

LS: That's awesome to hear. At first, it was kind of whatever came out, came out, and that's what I was going with. Not to sound up my own ass but I feel like I'm kind of lucky in that the vocal style that comes to me more naturally is a vocal style that I really like and it is a little bit of a grindy punky vocal that is a little Barney Greenway [Napalm Death], a little Chris Barnes [Six Feet Under, ex-Cannibal Corpse]. I really like my vocals personally but I wouldn't say that I try to sound like anyone in particular. That's just what comes more naturally to me.

Speaking of vocals, you and Henny got to sing for Eyehategod a few tours back. Brenner wrote about that a little bit in *ANTIGRAVITY* [December 2022] but I wanted to hear y'all's perspectives on what it was like getting to sing with Eyehategod.

LS: That was maybe the first winter tour that we did. It was the first tour where I was sick so I wasn't really sure how to navigate that yet. I wasn't sure what my voice could handle. When Zac [Ohler, Eyehategod manager] had been like, "Hey, can you fill in for some songs?" I was originally like, "I'm sick so I probably shouldn't." But then I was like, "Man, when am I ever going to get the chance to front Eyehategod? I've got to just do it." I did a song and then Hennessey did one song too? Two songs?

IH: That was my first and only time doing vocals and it happened to be with one of my favorite bands of all time, so that's pretty fucking sick. It was awesome.

I recently watched the band's latest hate5six clip, which includes a cover of "Jock Powerviolence" by Weekend Nachos. Have you dabbled with any other covers?

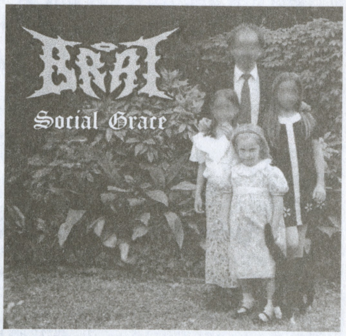
LS: We cover "Barracuda" [by Heart]. We did that on this last tour and a mini tour. That's been my favorite cover for sure so far.

DE: Its sick as fuck. It's fun.

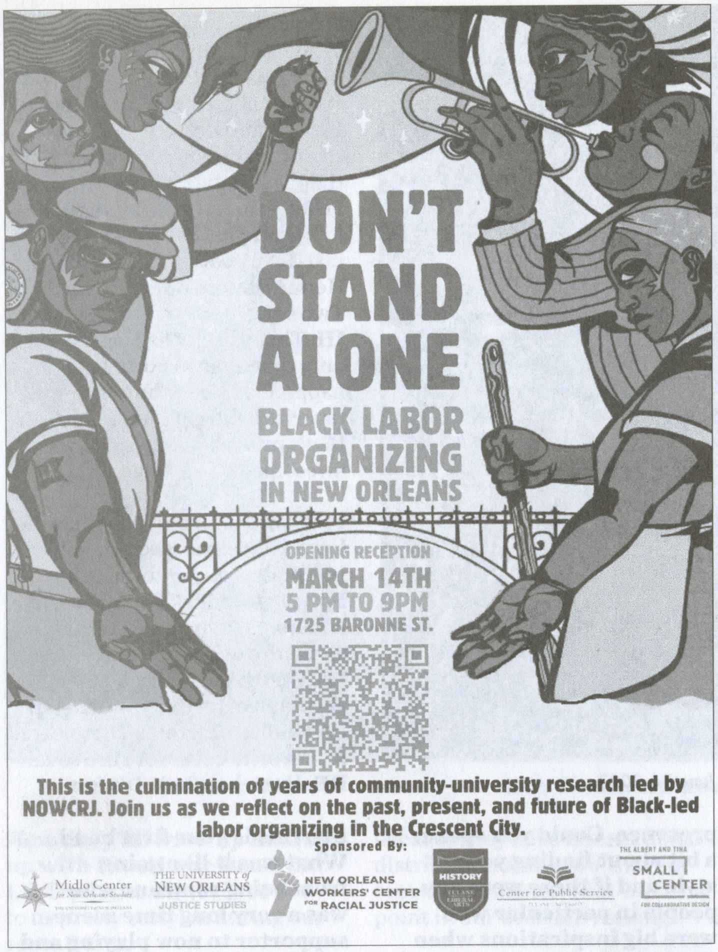
Liz, this is your first band. What was it like going from being someone who was a very long time scene supporter to now playing and touring?

LS: It's so cool and it's so much fun. I love it. I've always gone to shows. I never thought that I had any sort of talent to be able to actually partake myself, so I was just a fan and a supporter. It's been really cool to transition into being an artist as well. I'm just thankful that everyone I've met through years of going to shows has been supportive of BRAT as well.

For an extended cut of this interview, including Brenner's love of Creed, BRAT's work-tour balance, and the band's checkered past with ska, visit antigravitymagazine.com.



Social Grace is out now on Prosthetic Records. For more information, check out brat504.bandcamp.com.



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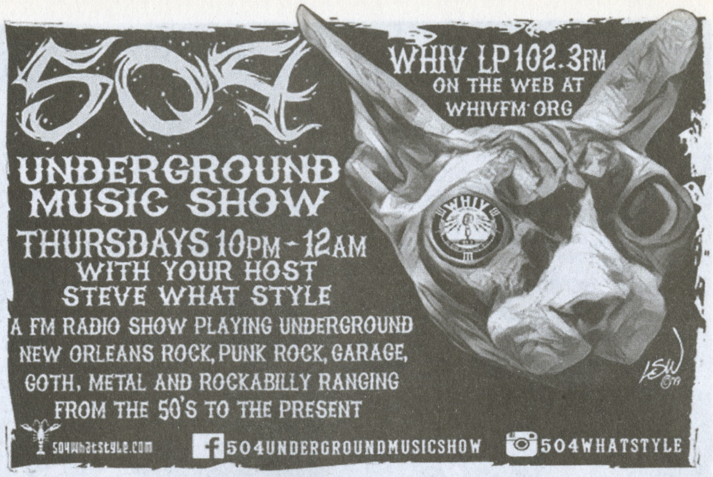

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TRAVIS GAUTHIER

BROTHER DEGE

June 8, 1967 - March 8, 2024

by William Archambeault

When Dege Legg ended his Earthbound journey on March 8, Louisiana lost, as he sang, a "crazy motherfucker." To most of the world, Dege is best remembered as Brother Dege, the dobro-wielding pseudo bluesman who reached a global audience after his song "Too Old to Die Young" appeared in Quentin Tarantino's 2012 film *Django Unchained*. However, Dege was so much more than that. Behind his scruffy beard and shaggy hair was a fierce individual who burned out his own path regardless of the noise around him and turned piss into gold in the process.

Dege created art that seemed entirely devoid of the fear of crashing and burning that keeps many of us from pushing our craft to its furthest extent. In fact, Dege had crashed and burned many times throughout his life. Each time, he brushed the dirt off of his shoulders and moved onward to the next project seemingly unfazed. He spent much of the '90s and aughts blazing through half-empty clubs as the singer-guitarist of Santeria, a mighty Lafayette band that fused strong psychedelic influences with hard-hitting Southern rock for explosive results that they called "psyouthern rock." Over two decades after its release, the band's 2002 album *House of the Dying Sun* stands out as a testament to the far-out potential of humid, swamp-infused freak rock despite being relegated to unfortunate obscurity. As the band petered out in the aughts, Dege pursued other musical endeavors including a stint in C.C. Adcock's band and leading his own group Black Bayou Construkt.

During those turbulent 2000s, Dege increasingly pursued projects alone, turning towards unconventional recording settings and exploring new textures in his music. He recorded an explorative, ambient album in the trailer he called home at the time and took to filming guerilla style performance videos in odd locations. He was equally comfortable stomping out his soon-to-be signature song "Too Old to Die Young" in an abandoned house as he was creating hypnotic loops of overlapping buzzing slide dobro in the woods outside of Mamou. In one such video, Dege sought out the acoustics of a parking lot in Lafayette to sculpt an engulfing soundscape, only for a police officer to quickly arrive at the scene during the performance. The officer threatened to throw Dege in jail and berated, "I heard that shit from all the way over there." Dege's instinctual reaction was to ask enthusiastically, "Did it sound good?"

Dege put on a fearless facade, but behind that was a kind man who went out of his way to help others. I'll never forget when he came to Chicago alone in 2010 a few months after releasing *Folk Songs of the American Longhair*, his proper debut as Brother Dege. I was just 15 years old and he was playing in a small bar. It wasn't exactly a winning equation for a young music fan. After exchanging some emails, we hatched a plan where he would vouch that I was his roadie-merch guy. It was a comical image when this baby-faced kid showed up, helping Dege lug a single amp into the empty room and sit behind a stack of the only CD that made up his solo discography as Brother Dege at the time. It was a miracle that the bar didn't call us out on this obvious bullshit. Looking back as an adult, I realize how much Dege stuck his neck out for me. He was driving across the country in a dying van that he slept in for most of that tour. Every night, he was liable to lose more money than he made, yet he still put a paying gig on the line just to get one kid in.

During those initial tours as Brother Dege, he only brandished a dobro, a slide, some pedals, and an amp as he spun twisted tales alone in tiny rooms across the country. Most nights, he slept in that dying black van with the phrase "Black Bayou Ministries" plastered on the side. Over the years, his solo efforts grew to include the assistance of the Brethren, a backing band of rotating characters, and multiple well-received European tours. By the time of his passing, Dege had reached such a notoriety in Europe that news of his passing even made the cover of *Rolling Stone*'s French edition. Over the course of his life, Dege amassed a lengthy discography with each album furthering his attempts to traverse the depth of the human experience across twisting musical terrains.

One week after Dege's passing, Prophecy Productions released his final studio album *Aurora* on its previously scheduled release date. The album serves as a bittersweet celebration of Dege's craftsmanship and his life. Conceptually, the album centers around the complex emotions that flow as a romantic relationship develops, stabilizes, ruptures, and eventually meets its demise. Throughout the album, Dege reflects on these feelings with the honesty of a man who experienced it firsthand during his final years. He soundtracks this by freely drawing upon the musical diversity that he explored throughout his life. "The Devil You Know" resonates with a beautiful mixture of pedal steel and piano while parts of the instrumental "Ouroboros" weighs heavy with slow, crushing guitars that sound akin to if Sunn O))) were raised out in the humid swamps instead of the dreary Pacific Northwest. On closing track "The Longing," Dege embarks on a 12-minute epic journey that begins with traditional songwriting before the piece is swallowed whole by ethereal, contemplative ambiance.

While Dege rose to become a celebrated figure in Lafayette through his musical output, he didn't simplistically feed into the area's branding of *Laissez Les Bon Temps Rouler!* In addition to playing music, Dege was a prolific writer who documented his countless ventures out to life's edge where he wrote down lesser-told tales of the South. One of his biggest achievements as a writer was the book *Cablog*, a collection that documents Lafayette's seedy underbelly through his perspective as a late-night cab driver circa the mid-2000s. During his stint with the Lafayette newspaper *The Independent Weekly*, he made the bold decision to abandon the comforts of home and live amongst the homeless in the area for a week in order to sculpt a humanizing depiction of them. When his music appeared in Tarantino's film in 2012, Dege was working full time at a men's homeless shelter, a job he said he would've continued working if his busy touring schedule hadn't complicated things. As a kid, I spent hours upon hours scrolling through Dege's blog-era writings. I found his perspective to be incredibly inspirational. His words taught me that everyone in the world has a story worth hearing, regardless of if the powers-that-be chose to amplify those stories or not. In light of Dege's passing, I encourage everyone to listen to and amplify the voices of the downtrodden around us.

SOUND CHECK

by Sabrina Stone

SABRINA STONE

BEN EPSTEIN

Ben Epstein is the owner of NOLA Mix Records at 1522 Magazine Street. He curates a quirky in-store exhibit lovingly called the "Museum of Mediocre Art (MoMA)." As of a few months ago, he took over The White Roach and created a new outpost of NOLA Mix at 5704 Magazine Street. He is the owner and founder of local record label Superjock Records. He DJs under the moniker Professor Shorthair, and also, he's a dad. In a free hour that he was able to carve out, I went to the OG shop and we spoke about performing, owning, teaching, and playing at bar mitzvahs, while he absentmindedly scratched over an Afro classical jazz flute album and some breakbeats.

Are any records too sacred to scratch?

Records, themselves, are a tool for me, whether I'm adding scratches or just mixing two different records for a party. I guess if there's a *crazy expensive* record that I wouldn't want to possibly destroy, then I wouldn't touch that. But in general, I think they're there to be used and manipulated, though there's a time and a place. I don't want to inject myself too much to mess up people's experiences. If I'm at a party and people are dancing, I'm not going to mess with the tempo. I might just add a little "*t-ka-t-ka-t-ka*" and throw it in, add a little flavor.

What kinds of records are ideal?

Recordings that don't have drum and are kind of ambient like flute, piano, keys—those are awesome to scratch and manipulate, especially on top of another record, like if I had a drum break or a hip-hop instrumental, scratching over that with a flute just lends itself perfectly to being a controller... Ultimately I just need to be in control. This is all very therapeutic.

How well do you have to know an album to play with it?

The more you know it the better, but I like the spontaneity of just picking something up and freestyling with it too. The album we're playing currently, I've actually never listened to before. I put it on now because I've been wanting to try it but it's in the wrong jacket, so I can't sell it. I wouldn't put it on while the store is open because the music I play in the shop is for enjoyment but also advertising.

What made you fall in love with all of this?

The reason I got into this to begin with was because of how it felt to experiment and have fun and get lost in it. I remember I bought turntables in '92 and I would just sit there and be in the zone, scratching or mixing or listening to two songs at once and trying to blend them, and three hours later I'd be like, "What the fuck just happened?" I don't think I'd still be doing this if I wasn't enjoying it that much.

But you have to make sacrifices sometimes.

As musicians or small business owners, sometimes you gotta take those corporate gigs, 'cause they pay well and it allows you to keep doing the other stuff. But I'm also at a certain age and I've been doing it a certain amount of time where I'm pretty much done doing those gigs. I did a bar mitzvah a year ago; I literally almost cried. Having 13-year-old girls bitching at you, saying, "You didn't play the right song!" all night... I just thought, "OK. I'm done."

Are there ever corporate party gigs that aren't too awful?

Oh yeah, that last example was extreme. There's been plenty of gigs where I'm playing standard stuff but I'm also in the mix and freestyling and picking what I want to play next and matching it and seeing people's reactions and it's still fun. I don't know them, they just hired me, it's a job; but it's a job that involves music, so even the ones I'm not thrilled about are still better than other stuff.

And you have *all* the control in your shop! You can curate it as your heart desires.

I love being able to carry local artists' stuff, turning people onto stuff that they're not going to find almost anywhere else, super underground of any genre. And me, myself, being a DJ, and coming from a beatmaker standpoint, I love providing this space where people can share their creativity. It's the opposite of these bar mitzvahs. You literally just come in and play whatever you want, you don't even have to beat match, you can just play music. People are walking in and out, they're vibing to it, enjoying it, and then they go, "Oh, I went to this little spot in New Orleans and not only was there free beer but there was also a DJ playing music" and they remember that stuff, and I love being that space.

You're talking about when you have guest DJs in the shop but also when you teach in-house lessons?

Back up a little bit: Before this was a record store, NOLA Mix was initially a youth DJ/producer/recording organization. We'd go to community centers, we'd go to afterschool programs, we'd go to different areas and teach classes. So when the opportunity came to open up an actual retail store nine years ago, that was very much part of the mission. I thought, "I can actually have my own space where I can have those classes and workshops out of." So I still do the DJ lessons, production, beat-making classes, some free, some paid one-on-one stuff—it's very much part of cultivating young people's interest in music that isn't necessarily horn or piano-based.

You're also helping them get over their stage fright by teaching them in front of a built-in crowd.
That's part of the process too, that they literally have an audience while they're learning. They're starting out in sort of a vulnerable place but people can tell you're doing a lesson, walking off of the street—I'm explaining things, and customers see and support that, and so, in turn, [the DJ students] internalize the encouragement.

You just opened up a new shop!
I just opened up a new shop, for better or for worse! Oh my goodness, *what was I thinking?*

What *were* you thinking?
Well, the opportunity presented itself. Danielle [Dietze], from White Roach [and *ANTIGRAVITY* contributor], wanted to move on with her career and her life. I went over there to ask her about buying her records and the first thing out of her mouth was, "Do you want to open up a second shop?" It had come across my mind before. This [location at 1522 Magazine] has established itself. We'll have been here for nine years in September. Expanding is kind of a cool idea. There was a space. The landlord is cool. There's a lot of different reasons why I gave it a shot. It's exciting but it's a different vibe up there, so I'm still trying to feel out the vibe, the demographic.

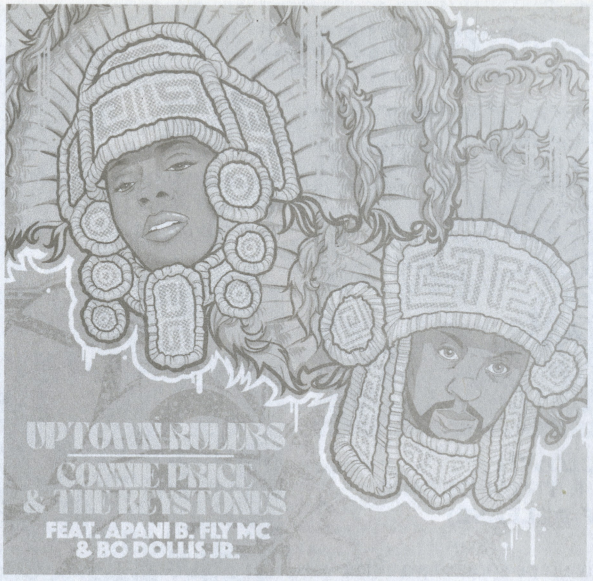
> ***"I bought turntables in '92 and I would just sit there and be in the zone, scratching or mixing or listening to two songs at once and trying to blend them, and three hours later I'd be like, 'What the fuck just happened?'"***

What are the differences between this shop and that one?
The space here is bigger, so I can do a lot more with it. Over there, it's smaller, so I'm still trying to find my footing. Here, I can cater some to tourists, carry a lot of local music, and I come from a hip-hop background, so I love funk and jazz and soul and world music and a lot of stuff that made up hip-hop... There is focus on hip-hop, indie alternative stuff, some rock, pop, and a decent Latin section. Our 45s section is growing and we have some bread and butter tote bags, shirts, and pins.

While the music you fill the shop with is stuff that people want, the art on the walls is purposefully what people *don't* want.
There's a balance there—you like the music but with the art... "What the hell is going on?" The Museum of Mediocre Art is stuff that I find in thrift stores or what people have donated. Either the art is good but there's a story to be told that is just *wild*, or the art is "bad" in terms of the person is trying... but was it made for a high school art project? I've had people donate paintings that in *their* eyes aren't good but in my eyes, they're *too good*.

Let's talk about your music label, Superjock Records.
I put out the first release on the label in 2014. I've been putting out a lot of 45s of my own remixes. I work closely with this guy Dan Ubick [a.k.a.] Connie Price. He's the main guy and he hires a lot of musicians... We've put out four 45s. Generally, I will do a remix for the B-side and we'll get a vocalist, so we've had Bootie Brown from The Pharcyde, Rakaa Iriscience from Dilated Peoples, Guilty Simpson (who did tons of stuff with J Dilla), and the most recent one is Apani B. Fly MC, who's a Queens, New York rapper, who is just an amazing lyricist *and* on the 45 is Bo Dollis Jr., from the Wild Magnolias. Everything that I put out, physically, is picked up by Fat Beats, which is an international distribution company, so everything gets out to London, Japan, Germany; and a lot of those places really love New Orleans and DJ culture and we're kind of a combination of those.

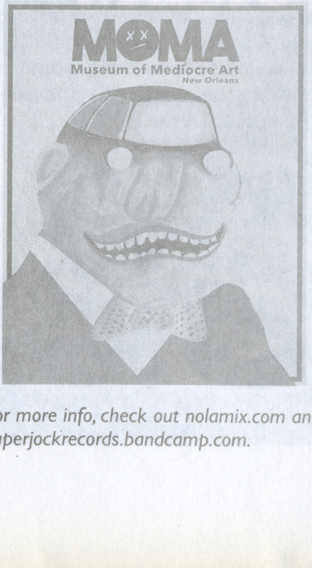
When you DJ, what do you bring with you?
Record-wise, I bring a bag of 45s. I just went to L.A., did a bunch of gigs, and had my bag of 45s. You need your good, sturdy needles that aren't going to skip around. And then, Technics [SL-]1200s really are the bread and butter of DJing, in my opinion. There's other ones but it has to be direct drive, it can't be belt-driven, or you'll get lag.


UPTOWN RULERS
CONNIE PRICE & THE KEYSTONES
FEAT. APANI B. FLY MC & BO DOLLIS JR.

This mixer is very specific to what I do as well. It's a Pioneer [DJ] DJM-S7 [Scratch-style 2-channel performance DJ mixer]. The reason I love this mixer in particular is because it's got the effects you can do with just playing vinyl. Often with mixers, the effects are only applicable if you're doing digital DJing. I can hook this up via USB to my laptop, have control vinyl, and I can control all the music *like a record* but the source is coming from my laptop. That's the best of both worlds, in a sense, where all my music is on the laptop but I can still control it like a record. I prefer just to do *vinyl* vinyl, to be interacting with the record versus interacting with my laptop. It's more labor intensive but it's more rewarding 'cause I'm more involved and getting more out of it.

When I'm teaching a lesson, I'll show them turntables with vinyl, I'll show them turntables with control vinyl, and then I'll show them a controller, which is just straight-up digital. I want them to know all the ways to DJ but, at the end of the day, a controller will be the cheapest and easiest and there are a lot of bells and whistles on a controller that are a lot of fun. With a traditional turntable, you have to really train your ear when you're beat matching from one record to another, making the tempo the same from one record to another, as opposed to looking at a laptop that gives you the bpms and has a sync button. This is like driving stick shift. If you only know how to drive automatic, you'll have no idea what to do with stick, but if you learn how to drive stick, you can do anything. It gives you that much more knowledge *plus* this is where DJing came from, so you're going back to the source of how hip-hop started. You're learning the history and the origins.

As a DJ and record shop owner, what would you recommend for an ideal at-home listening experience?
The rule is, if you can afford not to get a turntable that's got a built in speaker, you're good. A lot of the all-in-one components are not gonna sound very good. A lot of work goes into making a good sounding record and when you play them through tinny-ass speakers... I get that a lot of them look pretty and they're cheap, but if you have external speakers, you're always going to have better sound and better enjoyment and it's going to last you longer. ✍



For more info, check out nolamix.com and superjockrecords.bandcamp.com.

REVIEWS

BIG CLOWN!
LIVE'R THEN DETH?!!

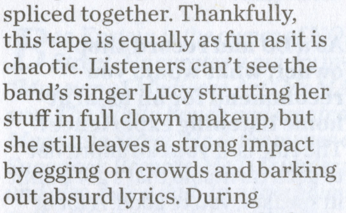
BIG CLOWN
LIVE'R THEN DETH?!!
(SELF-RELEASE)

This live tape sports two sides of scrappy rock'n'roll played on a serious sugar rush. Big Clown don't take themselves too seriously, offering a welcome break from the overly serious pissing contest that has come to be called punk rock. Big Clown fearlessly pieces together recordings from multiple different shows for a sometimes disorienting result. For instance, the B-side opens with a jarring collage of stage banter hecticly spliced together. Thankfully, this tape is equally as fun as it is chaotic. Listeners can't see the band's singer Lucy strutting her stuff in full clown makeup, but she still leaves a strong impact by egging on crowds and barking out absurd lyrics. During "Frogman" she commands the audience to hop on all fours, eventually going so far as to single out one attendee ("Hop, hop, I'm so fucking serious, hop, you specifically, hop! Hop!"). In addition to their solid originals, the band includes fun covers of Hoobastank's "The Reason" and AC/DC's "Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap." Some of these tracks were recorded during the band's show outside of the Black & Gold Wash & Fold back in 2021, but the rest are sourced from shows in their native Tennessee. There's plenty of humorous stage banter spliced in throughout both sides, ensuring that this listen is an entertaining one. *—William Archambeault*

DIPLØCRATS
SOMETHING SOMEWHERE SOMETIMES

DIPLÖCRATS
SOMETHING SOMEWHERE SOMETIMES
(SELF-RELEASE)

Local punk rock band Diplöcrats pack a punch across the nine energetic tracks that make up *Something Somewhere Sometimes*. Opener "Piss Pour" combines chant-heavy vocals and driving guitar for a sound that feels like a clear throwback to skateboard soundtracks of yesteryear. While lyrics occasionally offer some critiques on society ("American Dream"), the album leans more heavily on the type of pop-punk that is primarily defined by a mixture of lighthearted themes and self-reflective moments. "Troo-Dough" is a bizarre love letter to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, while "One of the Bundies" references both the fictional family from *Married... with Children* and serial killer Ted Bundy. In contrast, "No Love Lost" reaffirms that it is OK to sometimes let friendships drift apart. *Something Somewhere Sometimes* follows up the group's 2018 debut album *Life Under Lizard-People Rule* with a little help from some longtime friends who have not drifted apart after years in the local punk scene. BAD OPERATION and PEARS guitarist Brian Pretus recorded, mixed, and mastered the album, while BAD OP's Daniel "D-Ray" Ray adds trombone to "American Dream" and "Pharma Solution." Throughout it all, Diplöcrats and their friends clearly find joy in reaffirming their love for punk rock.
—William Archambeault



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Forever the Seasons
Father Ron and Friends

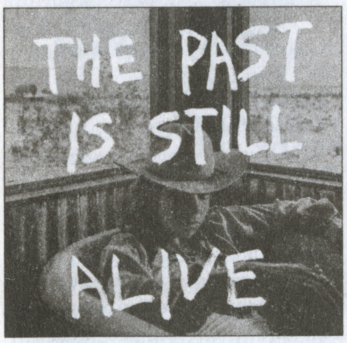
FATHER RON AND FRIENDS
FOREVER THE SEASONS
(LOUISIANA RED HOT)

Father Ron Clingenpeel is a retired Episcopal priest, known in the New Orleans music scene for his folk show on WWOZ and his folk/Americana band Father Ron and Friends, with whom he has toured the globe. Traditional American folk music is meant to be music of the people, and among Father Ron and Friends' influences are the art and lives of musicians such as Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, and The Seekers, artists who used their music to platform radical leftist politics and causes. According to the press release for his latest album, *Forever The Seasons*, one of Father Ron's motivations for touring as a musician is "evangelizing for folk's powers of peace and healing." *Forever The Seasons* is a showcase in local musicianship, featuring the talents of not only Father Ron but also Robert Eustis (guitar), David Schwartz (keyboards), Barbara Smith-Davis (vocals), and Max Valentino (bass), with contributions from Jack Craft (cello), Gina Forsyth (fiddle), Debbie Davis (backing vocals), and Cole Williams (backing vocals). The band is tight, producing music that, though not deviating too far from traditional folk, still sounds fresh and exciting—a testament to the band's talent and energy as well as the fact that this is a New Orleans band whose tradition includes Cajun and zydeco influences. Standout tracks include the rockabilly "Blues #42," New Orleans classic "St. James Infirmary," "Bayou Goula Ball," and the original, whimsical "Damned Roaches." *Forever The Seasons* is a reminder of the importance of preserving our musical traditions, and a confirmation that they still resonate across the decades. *Father Ron and Friends will be performing at Madame Vic's on Wednesday, April 3. —Mary Beth Campbell*

KIM GORDON
THE COLLECTIVE

KIM GORDON
THE COLLECTIVE
(MATADOR)

Over the four decades of her career, Kim Gordon's music and visual art—as both a collaborator and as a solo artist—has often delved into examining aspects of mainstream culture through an experimental lens. In recent years, she has been interested in the relationship we have with technology, specifically smartphones: Her 2023 exhibit at the 303 Gallery in New York presented a series of 13 abstract paintings meant to explore and question what it means to have this technology constantly at our fingertips. *The Collective*, her second solo album, is named after one of these paintings (itself inspired by Jennifer Egan's 2022 novel *The Candy House*), with stream of consciousness lyrics delivered against a cacophony of trap beats and industrial guitar work meant to emulate our technology-drenched brains. As with her 2019 solo debut *No Home Record*, *The Collective* was produced by Justin Raisen—known for his work with Lil Yachty, Yves Tumor, Charli XCX, and Sky Ferreira—and is heavily indebted to alt-pop and hip-hop. Gordon leans further into her absurdist poet persona, flitting between mundane thoughts, emotional outbursts, and partially-formed musings on bigger ideas. No one idea is visited for too long, mimicking the mind of someone who is overstimulated but, ultimately, lonely and unfocused—a commentary perhaps on where we now find ourselves in this world we've created. An exception is the sinister "I'm A Man," perhaps the most topic-focused track on the album which explores Gordon's long-time fascination with the performance of masculinity ("I'm supposed to save you / But you got a job / You got a degree / And I'm just a fucking slob"). *The Collective* is ambitious and provocative, something that is becoming disturbingly rare as algorithms continue to take over how we consume and think about music. These songs challenge the listener to be a little uncomfortable and to think in new ways—the hallmark of good art, and a testament to Gordon's continued powers as an artist, which, remarkably, only seem to grow over time. —*Mary Beth Campbell*


THE PAST IS STILL ALIVE

HURRAY FOR THE RIFF RAFF
THE PAST IS STILL ALIVE (NONESUCH)

On their ninth full-length studio album, Hurray for the Riff Raff and lead singer Alynda Segarra return, in a most personal way, to their roots. Local fans have probably long known Alynda to be part of a community of travelers and artists, but for many HFTRR listeners, these deeply personal songs (complete with some highly scene-specific lyrics) will paint a new and richer picture of their experiences. Segarra's father passed away just before this album was recorded, and the fingerprints of that loss are all over these songs, which weave in and out of time and memory, creating a truly expansive landscape. Opener "Alibi" belies intensely dark lyrics with bright and airy instrumentation. The opening line of "You don't have to die if you don't wanna die" tells the listener from the jump what this album will be about: grief, loss, and grappling to hold on to the past (and people) while simultaneously knowing it's all slipping through your fingers. Musically, the band is in top form, masterfully navigating the balance between restraint and emotion. Guest spots from the likes of Conor Oberst and Meg Duffy add to the tapestry without distracting from the message. At its heart, this is an album for outsiders, for the queer kids and the weird kids living life on the fringes. Despite their success, it's clear that Segarra still feels a deep and abiding kinship with the kids they hopped trains and hid in bushes with. In standout track "Hourglass" they croon: "Nobody here really knows me / They just wanna tell me stories / About the friends that they met in college / And how famous people are their parents / I always feel like a dirty kid / I used to eat out of the garbage / I know I should probably get over it / But somehow it feels I'm still in it." Ultimately, we are all a result of the lives we have led, and Segarra's past comes alive for the listener in this tonally rich and poetically rewarding offering. —*Erin Hall*

THE JESUS AND MARY CHAIN
GLASGOW EYES (FUZZ CLUB)

Glasgow Eyes is the second new album from Scottish alt-rockers and noise pop/shoegaze pioneers The Jesus and Mary Chain since founding members and brothers Jim and William Reid resurrected the project in 2007. It is always fascinating to witness the evolution of a band's music over the decades, particularly when they are in their second act. Ironically, the incorporation of retro synths on this album has given a fresh spin to their music, which has always been known for being more guitar-forward. Though the songs on *Glasgow Eyes* certainly do not shy away from musings on melancholy and past regrets ("Chemical Animal," "Second of June")—they are a

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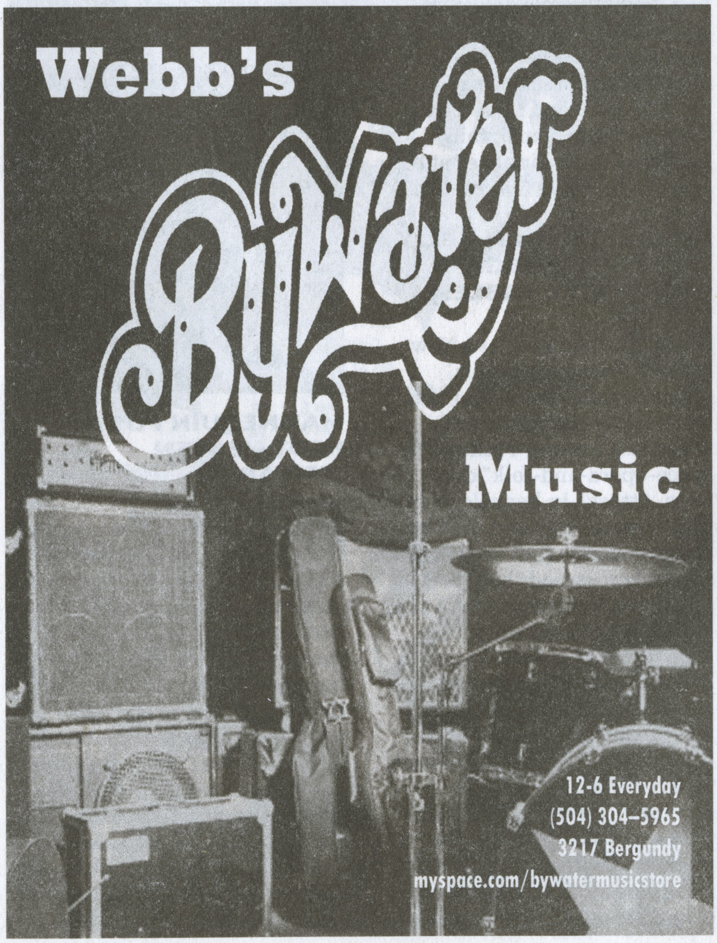
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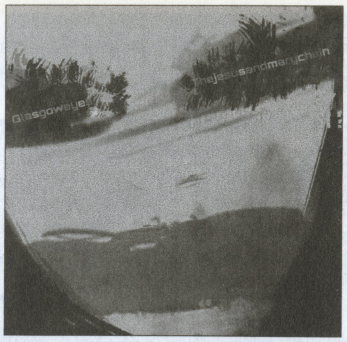
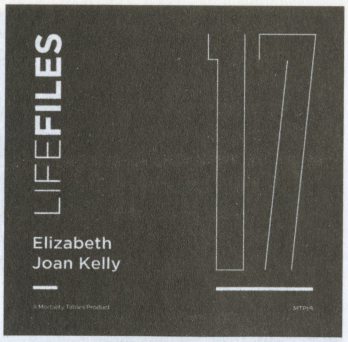


Scottish band, after all—they are more introspective than tortured, as one would hope a band and its members would be after nearly 40 years. Lead single "jamcod," which was first released in November 2023, is arguably the most reminiscent of their earlier music and the most autobiographical song on the album ("Breaking up and then falling down and my heart beats much too slow / Best notify the other brother, there's no place to go"). There are many references to other bands as well, as though the Reid brothers are reflecting on their place in the rock canon: "The Eagles and the Beatles," which borrows the guitar riff from the Joan Jett hit "I Love Rock 'N Roll," and the Velvet Underground-influenced "Hey Lou Reid," the title a cheeky reference to Lou Reed's influence on the Reid brothers. *Glasgow Eyes* may not break new ground, but The Jesus and Mary Chain have managed to maintain relevance by looking back at their past. *—Mary Beth Campbell*



ELIZABETH JOAN KELLY
LF17 / EDINBURGH
(MORTALITY TABLES)

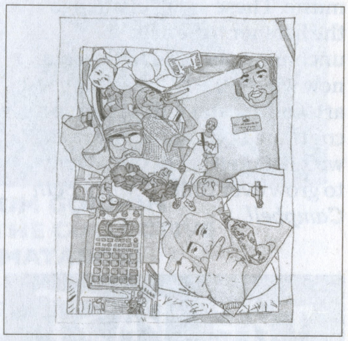
Elizabeth Joan Kelly is a New Orleans-based electronic composer, also known for her work as one half of the self-described "swamp-rock-meets-space-opera-and-folk" duo Orca, Attack!. In her solo work, Kelly creates lush and dreamy musical worlds that exist at that magical crossroads between darkwave, industrial, synth pop, ambient, and classical music, weaving in so-called "found sounds" and old-school MIDI to add an extra, otherworldly layer to her compositions. Her latest release, *LF17 / Edinburgh,* is part of U.K.-based label Mortality Tables' LIFEFILES project, in which artists are presented with a series of field recordings to transform into original music. Kelly was given recordings made in Edinburgh, Scotland in August 2021 which, according to her website, she "undoubtedly imbued with [her] own recent trip to Scotland in 2023," blending and mixing them into wholly new creations. The three electro ambient tracks, each named after a location in Edinburgh where the original field recordings were made ("Calton Hill," "Princes Street Gardens," "Calton Road Cobblestones"), are soothing and otherworldly, occasionally employing synthesizers to flirt with more unsettling undertones. The end result only hints at the original recordings, Kelly's production leaving the faintest memory of the actual time and place, like stepping into a dream reality. *—Mary Beth Campbell*

MANNEQUIN PUSSY
I GOT HEAVEN
(EPITAPH)

I Got Heaven, the latest release from Philadelphia quartet Mannequin Pussy, does not waste time with pretense. Within the first few seconds of the titular opening track, the band sets the stage for an album that unabashedly embraces vulnerability, messy emotions, and horniness ("And what if we stopped spinning? / And what if we're just flat? / And what if Jesus himself ate my fucking snatch?"). Though a punk band at its roots, Mannequin Pussy have allowed their music to evolve on this album, experimenting with different genres and slicker production. "I Don't Know You" is melodic, synth-tinged folk pop, while "Nothing Like," with its disco drum beat, and the guitar-forward "Sometimes" are reminiscent of songs you'd hear on an alt-rock radio station in the 1990s. In a roundabout way, this has made them a better punk band, even if their sound now shifts more toward the pop end of the spectrum. In addition to the abandon with which they lay bare their emotions on these songs, they sound more confident and free on the album's more purely punk and hardcore tracks ("OK? OK! OK? OK!," "Of Her," "Aching"). This has led to comparisons to Hole's *Live Through This,* and indeed the argument can be made that Mannequin Pussy are heralds of a revival of pop music that is glorious in its contradictions and emotions, music that might be carefully produced but is still authentic and messy, music that is made to be shared, not merely consumed. *—Mary Beth Campbell*

OH DANG
S/T
(FULL-TILT)

The press release for local alt-country group Oh Dang's self-titled debut suggests the album's somber mood may come as a surprise "despite their upbeat band name." For my part, I always heard it as more of the "Oh Dang" that might accompany a stubbed toe, a missed bus, or a crush leaving the party with one's rival. With this understanding, the mood lives up to expectations—in a good way! The album starts with spooky, arpeggiated "Sink or Swim" and remains downtempo for the first three tracks. "Crushed Red Pepper" and "Idiot Kids" bring a jauntier vibe, but above a capricious beat the lyrics remain wistful ("All that's left / Was something I could never have / ...I'm a fool for you," states the former). The 10-track, 39-minute album winds down with the particularly emotive "Everybody's Nobody," which begs to be heard on a rainy Appalachian porch. The beautifully compatible vocals of Harper Browman and Tyler Ryan call to mind Shovels & Rope, with the earnest folksiness and storytelling of Iron & Wine, John Prine, and Brandi Carlile in the mix as well. Ryan also plays guitar, and Eric Anduha on "everything else" (per their Bandcamp) rounds out this three-piece. *Oh Dang launches their spring tour through seven Southern states on March 29, rounding it out with a hometown show at Anna's on April 28. —Angela Calonder*



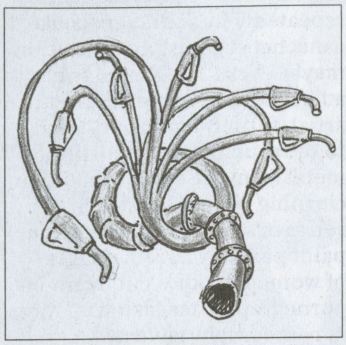
_THESMOOTHCAT AND WINO WILLY
READY, SET
(SINKING CITY)

Ready, Set feels like an inevitable joining of creative forces. The similarly curious palettes of New Orleans-based rapper _thesmoothcat and producer Wino Willy, who has previously worked with the likes of Mach-Hommy and Tha God Fahim, make for an incredibly fruitful and exciting partnership. Both musicians hold firm roots in the boom-bap tradition, and both sport an ear for the eclectic and experimental. On "OFFTOP," Wino Willy weaves a crunchy, off-kilter beat that seamlessly supports _thesmoothcat's characteristically vibrant lyrics and slouchy cadence. Later, the pair continues to experiment with "SAY MY NAME," a rare blend of aesthetics that results in something that could only be called jazz-trap—exactly the kind of novel territory in which these two thrive. And, as usual, _thesmoothcat brings along some of his favorite Louisiana rap comrades, with featured verses from Wakai and Juu rounding out the album's lyrical roster. Though fairly brief, *Ready, Set* will certainly reward repeat listens, with such rich layering in its instrumentals and such a thoughtful pen behind its lyrics. —*Zane Piontek*

THIS IS NEW TONE
LIVE FROM THE 2023 BAD TIME RECORDS TOUR

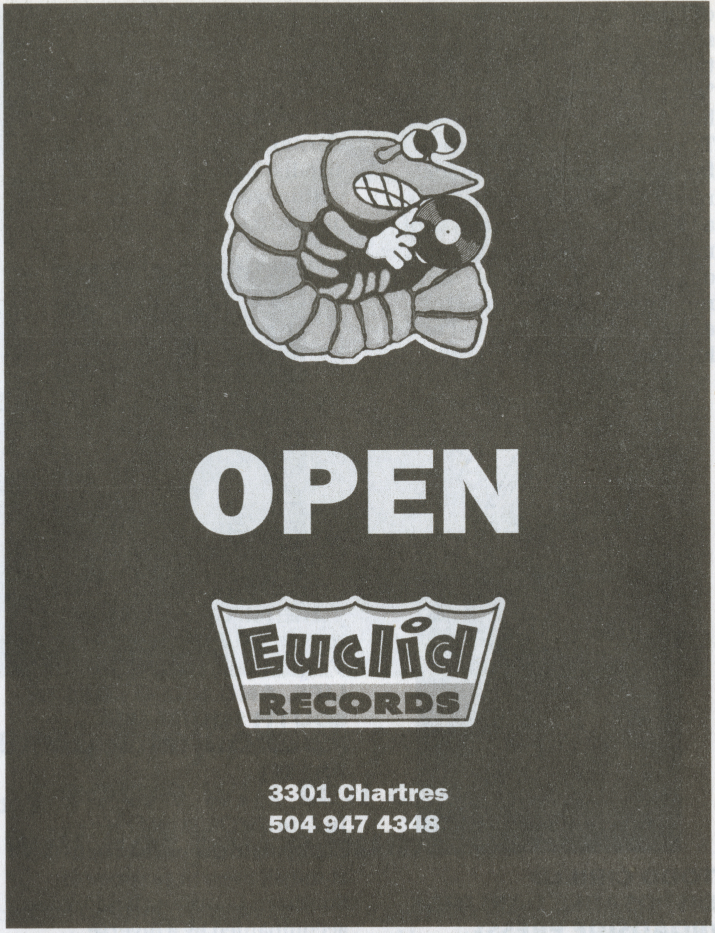
VARIOUS ARTISTS
THIS IS NEW TONE
(BAD TIME)

THIS IS NEW TONE documents the live power of the new generation of ska punk bands that have kept fans of the subgenre skanking over recent years. This compilation draws upon performances that occurred during a 2023 tour orchestrated by Bad Time Records, which included a stop at Tipitina's as part of Community Records' annual Block Party. New Orleans bands BAD OPERATION and Joystick contribute to the fun with high energy performances that prove these local groups are a vital part of the modern wave of ska. While ska punk is far too often written off as silly, juvenile dance music, many of the bands featured on this comp use it as a means to address serious issues. On "Boys Will Be Girls," We Are The Union singer Reade Wolcott, a trans woman, offers words of empowerment to those who live their lives as they wish in the face of transphobes. On "Decolonize Yr Mind," JER launches a far-reaching critique on society, tackling everything from gentrification to Palestine. Even when subjects get serious, the groups keep the sold out shows' dancefloors moving with infectious grooves. The vinyl edition of this compilation sports some bonus tracks that feature fun, spontaneous team-ups between bands, ending on a massive tribute to the subgenre's heroes Operation Ivy. —*William Archambeault*



CURTIS SCHREIER
SWAMP ALPS: POST CARBON COLLAPSE / FUTURE VISIONS
(YES WE CANNIBAL)

In *Swamp Alps,* visionary designer, printmaker, and provocateur Curtis Schreier creates alternative strategies for well-being and critiques of capitalist obsession through his performance, design, and importantly—radical imagination. A member of defunct art-architecture collective Ant Farm, Schreier's past projects include 1975's *Media Burn,* where he drove a souped-up 1959 Cadillac through a fiery wall of old TVs, inflatable environments, and utopian building design inspired by architectural visionaries like Buckminster Fuller. Schreier's architectural rendering for *Three Frequency Geodesic Dome* "built at 30' diameter and weight of 300 pounds" for the Exploratorium Dome Toystore, 1970-71, appeared in his recent exhibition *Swamp Alps: Post Carbon Collapse / Future Visions,* curated by designer, artist, and curator Liz Flyntz at Yes We Cannibal in Baton Rouge. Schreier's archival architectural designs accompany *Swamp Alps,* a project addressing climate crisis and housing scarcity in this exhibition, showcasing how Schreier's imaginative pursuit of sustainability persists. An audacious utopia unfolds in 3D gourd-like models of cardboard and tulle populated by tiny plastic people, a vision that re-casts discarded frames of oil rigs into high-rise multi-level housing for the swamps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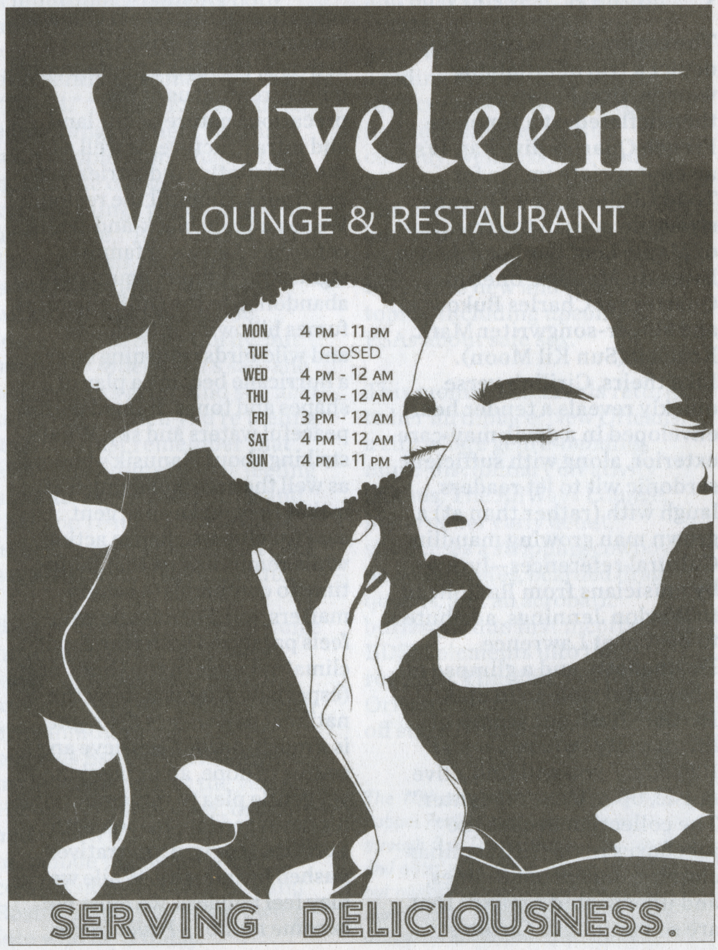
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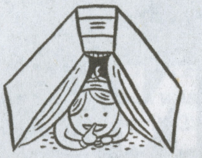
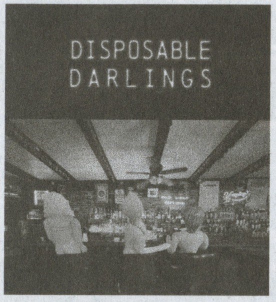
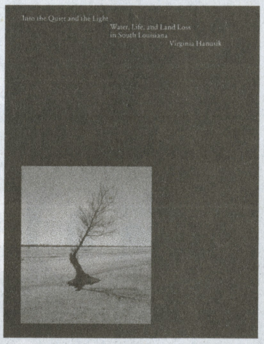
of Louisiana. Conceived for soaring elevations, these tall buildings would create a "cooling" environment at top, hence the alpine reference. The earth tone and organic form of the cardboard models recall mud dauber wasp nests, adding an unexpected layer of naturalism. Here, the apparatus of offshore oil drilling is repurposed as *home*, and the extractive is transformed to the holistic. *—Veronica Cross*





TODD CIRILLO
DISPOSABLE DARLINGS (ROADSIDE PRESS)

The covers of this collection depict a trio of inflatable women, first blown up, then deflated, at a timeless French Quarter dive bar. It's an appropriate image for Todd Cirillo, a New Orleans streetlife poet in the tradition of Maple Leaf Bar favorite son Everette Maddox, onetime Quarter rat Charles Bukowski, and singer-songwriter Mark Kozelek (Sun Kil Moon). Like theirs, Cirillo's verse quickly reveals a tender heart enveloped in a devil-may-care exterior, along with sufficient sardonic wit to let readers laugh with (rather than at) a grown man growing maudlin. Cultural references—lyrics by musicians from Radiohead to Waylon Jennings, a tribute to beat poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and a glimpse of a beautiful woman in an AC/DC tee—flesh out scenes of life in a city "where even at 1:24 a.m. / you will find / live music, open bars, / laughter." The collection evokes the jukeboxes lined with familiar classics, uncharted B-sides, and unexpected remixes that are so familiar to Cirillo's poetic persona. *Disposable Darlings* will find a place on the shelves of the likely substantial number of readers who immediately recognize Harry's Corner from the cover and can also list each of the bookstores within walking distance of that bar. *—Steven Melendez*


Into the Quiet and the Light
Water, Life, and Land Loss in South Louisiana
Virginia Hanusik

VIRGINIA HANUSIK
INTO THE QUIET AND THE LIGHT: WATER, LIFE, AND LAND LOSS IN SOUTH LOUISIANA (COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS)

In *Into the Quiet and the Light,* photographer Virginia Hanusik presents a series of Southern Louisiana landscapes, accompanied by a diverse collection of texts from climate change-focused experts and activists. Hanusik's photographs quietly remind us of the precarious nature of our land and infrastructure, as well as the exploitative industries that continue to imperil the region. We see, in rich black-and-white, considered views of familiar sights. Old refinery equipment abandoned to the Gulf, chemical fumes billowing into clouds, and wild birds returning after a hurricane become a play of shapes and tones, framed within peaceful waters and sky. What's striking about Hanusik's photos, as well the accompanying text, is that they make an urgent case for climate change action while reminding us that taking time to contemplate beauty matters, too. For anyone who feels paralyzed with fear about climate change in the Gulf Coast (especially after watching the national news), *Into the Light* is a much-needed reprieve and source of hope, an impassioned yet gentle plea to remember that it's never too late to look with a critical lens upon narratives pushed by industry. While we may feel helpless, we must not become numb. *—Paula Ibieta*

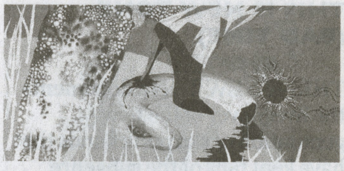
ART BRINE

cont'd from pg. 13

exhibition. A film projected wall-sized in the semi-dark middle gallery shows a woman at a distance in silhouette. She repeatedly hits what looks like a machete against metal or maybe rock. In a film on the adjacent wall, a woman, the artist, futilely scrubs a floor to the sound of metal hitting metal from the other film. Is cleaning violent? In *MUD,* a series of small collages, mud paint partially covers images of women's bodies cut from pornographic magazines. *Is pornography violent? Is the hungry gaze violent? Is covering bodies violent?* Works from NOMA's collection, sculptural works from Africa, are displayed throughout the show, integrated with Mutu's three-dimensional works. Is recontextualizing violence? Appropriation?

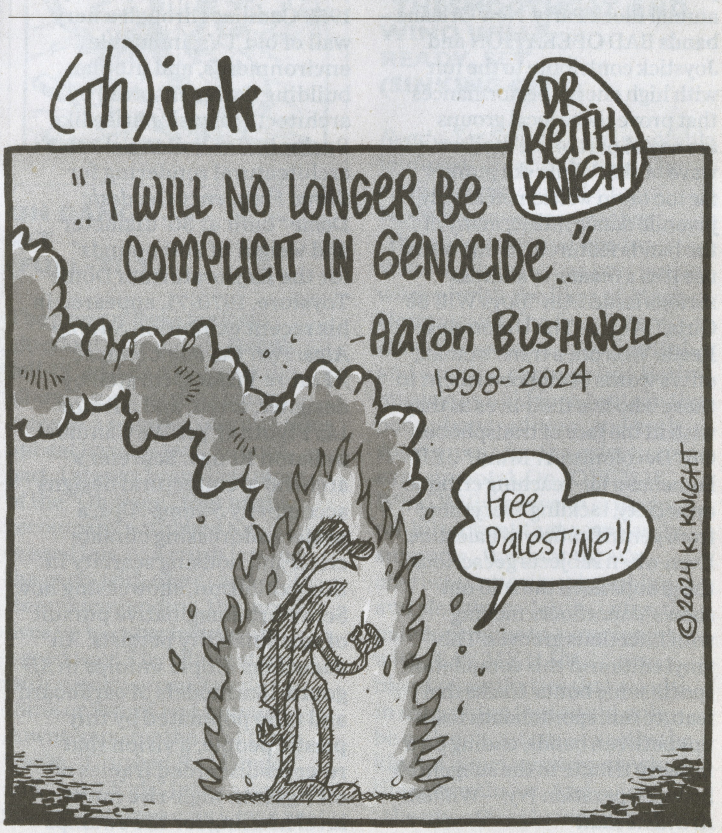
In the gallery farthest from the entrance-exit, the turnaround point, water is a dominant theme and the walls are white. There's water gurgling in sculptures on the floor. What looks like water damage details the base of the walls and there's an ocean in the film of a woman wading into the surf. Is water violent? Here, we know it can be. A voiceover, a woman's voice, sings "Amazing Grace." I can still hear the machete in the previous room, though quieter. *Amazing Grace isn't violent, is it?* I thought. The song ends and then the same voice sings "Amazing Grace" in an unfamiliar language, one I was told came from Africa. I listened and I wondered, *is English violent?*

Why count the kinds of violence? What benefit comes from statistics? What isn't violent? Before I left the exhibition, I looked at a small collage titled *Intertwined,* showing two figures with hyena heads and women's bodies. The breasts of one of the figures are bared. They seem to glitter like white sequins in light. *Breasts aren't violent,* I thought. *1: Breasts aren't violent at all.*



Wangechi Mutu: Intertwined will be at the New Orleans Museum of Art through July 14. For more info, check out noma.org/exhibitions/wangechi-mutu.

Got art news, leads, or tips? Get in touch! artbrine@antigravitymagazine.com.



ESMERELDA

cont'd from pg. 19

JON HALOOSSIM

"Puppets in general, they crack people open. For some reason, people will tell a puppet things that they will not tell a human..."

Orleans, where he studied as a Tulane graduate student. Working in the Los Angeles film industry, Roston was struck by the disconnect between the expensive Hollywood projects around him and the apparent lack of resources devoted to public health communications, especially around issues like overdose prevention and the fentanyl crisis. He wanted to make public health campaigns more engaging around issues affecting people's everyday lives. "Health communications is a niche within public health that's super important and often falls short of getting people to think about behavior change and their environment," Roston says.

Roston founded Gigantic Fantastic, a production company that brings whimsical storytelling elements, like (but not limited to) puppets, into visual public health campaigns. Through Gigantic Fantastic, Roston has produced education around STI testing, local food systems, and demystifying clinical trials, among other topics. As a puppeteer, Roston has performed for both kids and adults, from puppet rock band Taxidermy Time Machine (fun for the whole family) to the Fungineers (adult psychedelic hip-hop puppet show).

"This is the only country in which puppetry is considered a kid's art form," Gastelum says. "In most other countries in the world, it's one of the fine arts." Gastelum believes that puppetry's global scale and impact is poorly understood in the United States, particularly the vast range of ancient traditions and technical skills it encompasses, and how different forms all share common threads.

"I think all puppetry is inherently political," Gastelum says. "You're making a choice to represent life in some form. Your representation, and the choices it involves, reflects a lot about your perspective on what it is to be alive and how you behave in the world."

For Esmerelda and fellow New Orleans-born puppet Dizzy Dangerfield, one of the most interesting and often rewarding ways to practice puppetry is on the street. Esmerelda captivates crowds on-stage, but her kooky relatability translates to improvised conversations with strangers, fellow puppeteers, or folks looking to unload their own chaos. Both Roston and Dizzy's creator, Benjamin Martin, say people are often more comfortable talking to puppets than to the humans bringing them to life. "Puppets in general, they crack people open. For some reason, people will tell a puppet things that they will not tell a human," Martin says. "I think it has to do with our inner child; I think it has to do with telling a creature something instead of a human, maybe like an imaginary friend. It's not as real, but in a way, it's more real."

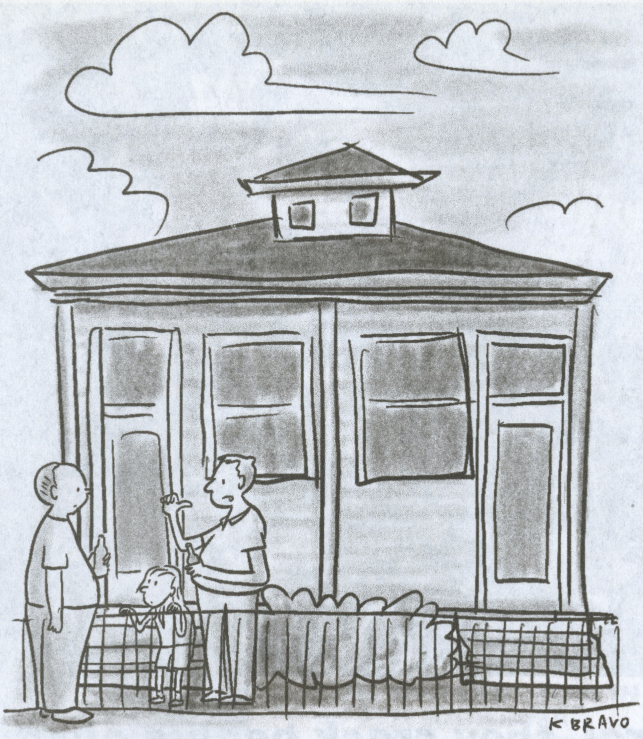
Puppetry like "Puppets Against AIDS," a show that also operated as an educational workshop about HIV prevention, demonstrated how puppets can be used to facilitate conversations about difficult, complex topics. Audience members felt comfortable engaging, which resulted in positive behavior change like safer sex practices. The comfort created by using a puppet as a mouthpiece benefits both audience and puppeteer. Roston says he can express himself differently as Esmerelda than as "David." "When Esmerelda says something, it might resonate with people more than if I say it, and she can get away saying certain things which might be a bit risque," Roston says. "And I think it was really impactful, especially in the beginning, when she was saying how lonely she is. She's horny, but she's also lonely, she's sad, she experiences grief. And she also is scared... When you're feeling anxious, just remember that everyone around you is feeling anxious about something and that you're not alone in your anxiety—and when Esmerelda says that, that's so impactful."

Roston's impressive vocal range includes Esmerelda's sweet spot: "that cigarette-smoking, kind of sounds like your Jewish grandmother range." Roston believes Esmerelda has grown more nuanced over the years: Her early brand of sex, drugs, and rock'n'roll has evolved to include the wisdom and compassion of older icons and Roston's own journey growing into who he is today.

Esmerelda remains booked and busy this year, as Roston curates a puppet wellness experience for the Melrose Trading Post in L.A., where they currently live. His vision includes all-ages music, comedy, wellness tips, and introductions to practices like meditation. He's also developing Esmerelda's viral Puppet Service Announcements to feature new and timely topics, including upcoming PSAs about safe sex.

This month, Esmerelda returns to her birthplace: New Orleans, a city where genre-bending, multi-disciplinary creativity blooms. The AllWays Lounge, home of her early debut, showcases a stripping cowboy on rollerskates, bearded drag queens, and an acrobatic burlesque duo that incorporates BDSM elements into their routines. The ability of New Orleanians to innovate on and off stage is endless.

The 10th annual New Orleans Giant Puppet Festival takes place April 4 through 8 at The Mudlark Public Theatre and other venues. For more info, check out neworleansgiantpuppetfest.com. For more info on Esmerelda, follow her on Instagram at @esmereldathepuppet.



"For the kid's Spring Break we're just going to stay in the Airbnb in the other half of our shotgun."

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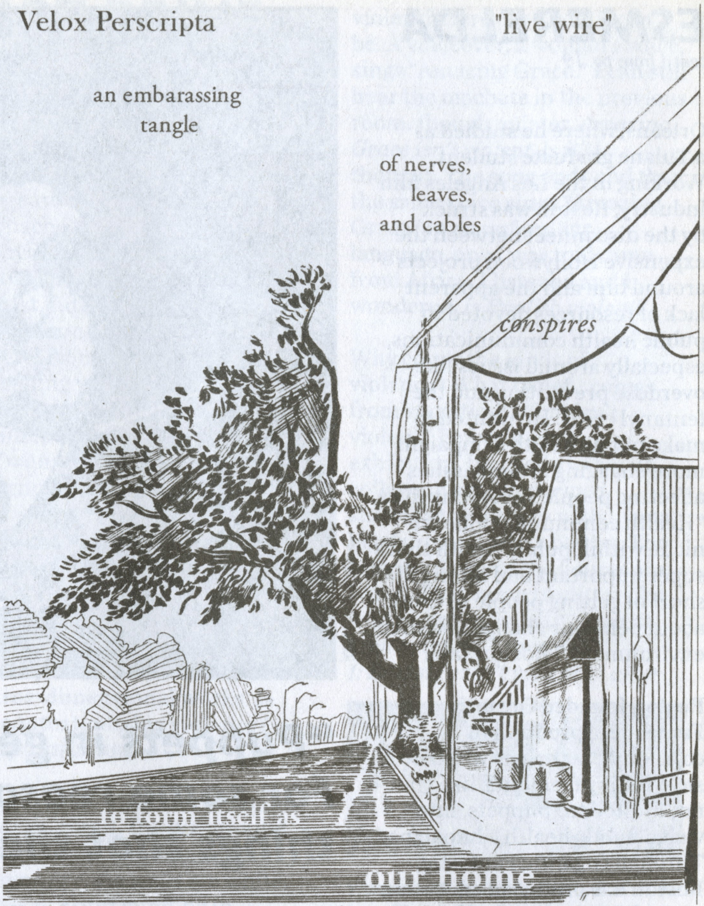


Velox Perscripta

"live wire"

an embarassing
tangle

of nerves,
leaves,
and cables

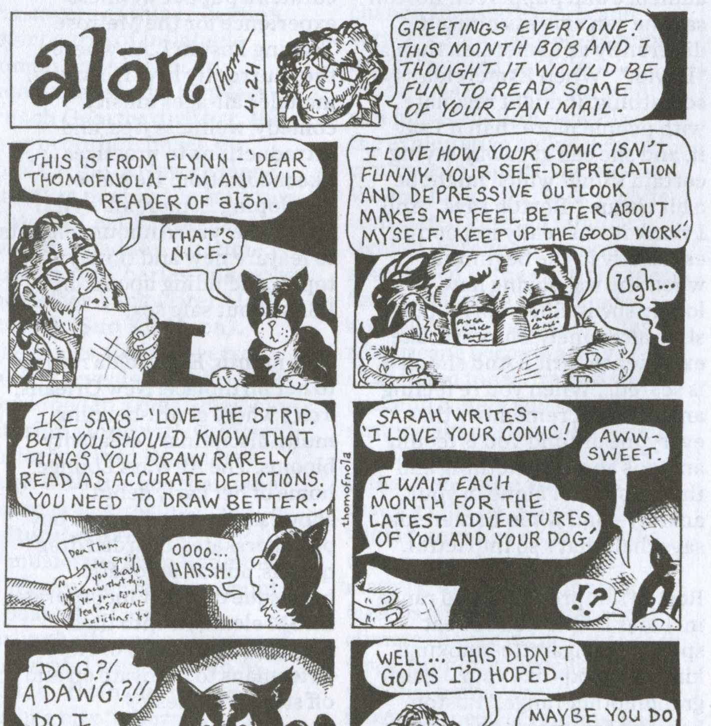
conspires

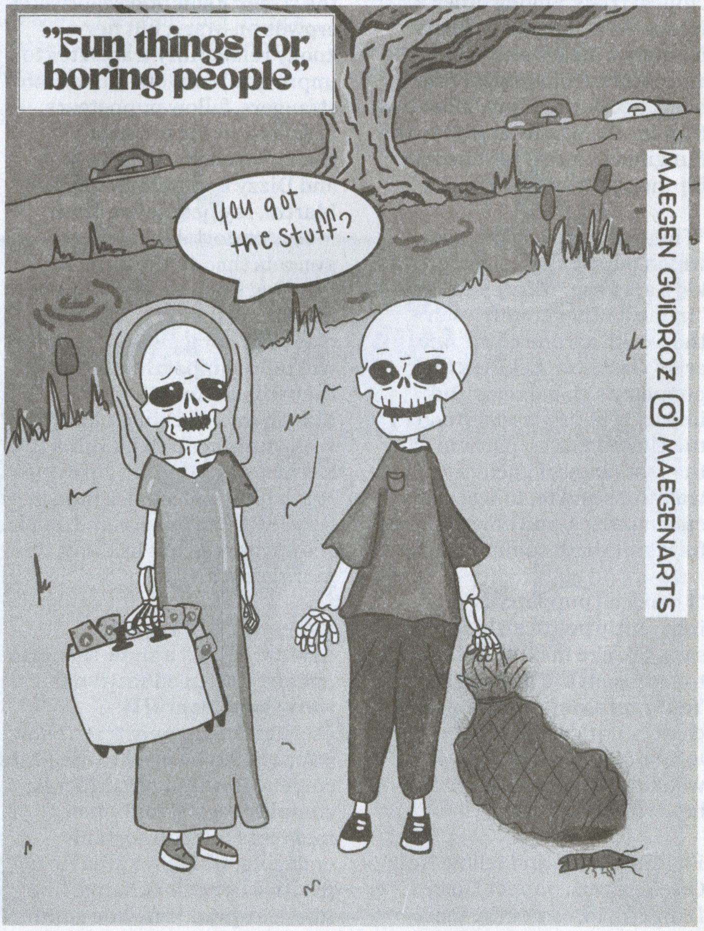
to form itself as

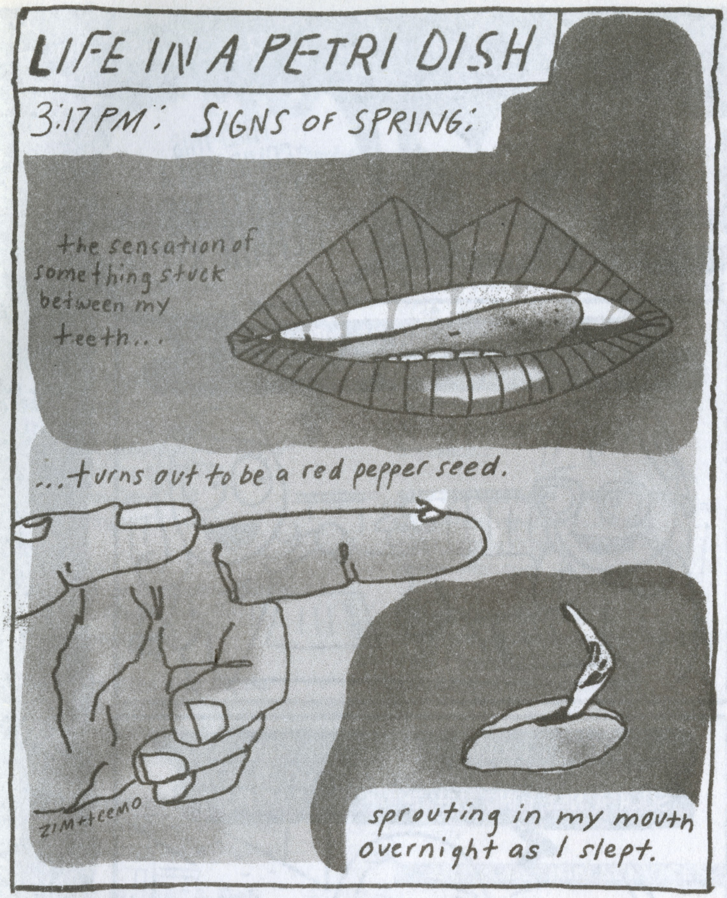
our home

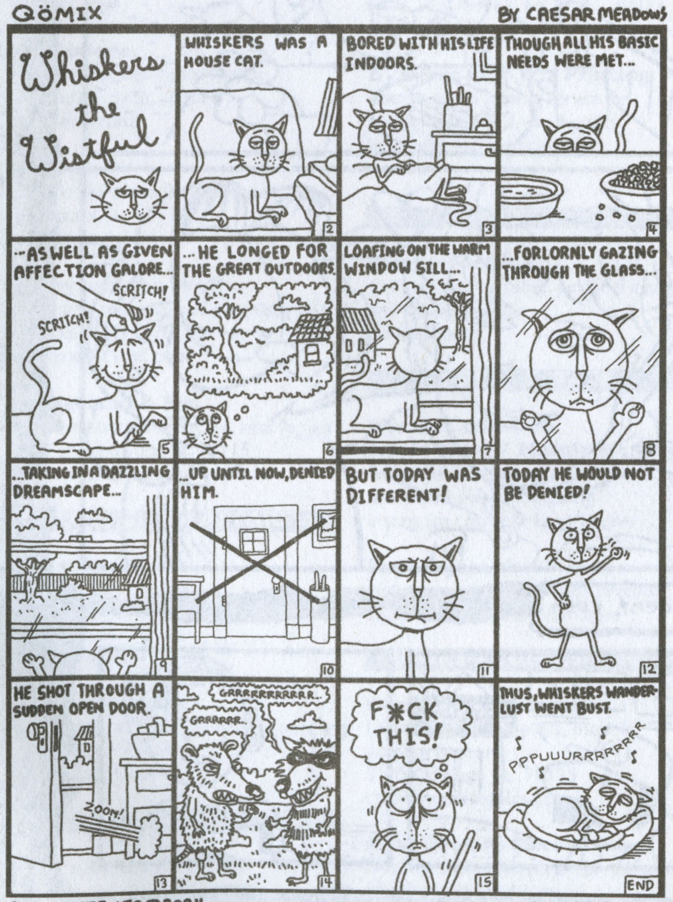
Hugo Martínez

algoenespanol@gmail.com Instagram: @hugom_art_inez


alōn
Thom 4.24
GREETINGS EVERYONE! THIS MONTH BOB AND I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE FUN TO READ SOME OF YOUR FAN MAIL.
THIS IS FROM FLYNN - 'DEAR THOMOFNOLA- I'M AN AVID READER OF alōn.
THAT'S NICE.
I LOVE HOW YOUR COMIC ISN'T FUNNY. YOUR SELF-DEPRECATION AND DEPRESSIVE OUTLOOK MAKES ME FEEL BETTER ABOUT MYSELF. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK.'
Ugh...
IKE SAYS - 'LOVE THE STRIP. BUT YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT THINGS YOU DRAW RARELY READ AS ACCURATE DEPICTIONS. YOU NEED TO DRAW BETTER.'
Dear Thom
OOOO... HARSH.
thomofnola
SARAH WRITES - 'I LOVE YOUR COMIC!
AWW- SWEET.
I WAIT EACH MONTH FOR THE LATEST ADVENTURES OF YOU AND YOUR DOG.'
!?
DOG?! A DAWG?!! DO I LOOK LIKE A DAWG?!
WELL... THIS DIDN'T GO AS I'D HOPED.
MAYBE YOU DO NEED TO DRAW BETTER!


"Fun things for boring people"
you got the stuff?
MAEGEN GUIDROZ
MAEGENARTS


LIFE IN A PETRI DISH
3:17 PM: SIGNS OF SPRING:
the sensation of something stuck between my teeth...
...turns out to be a red pepper seed.
sprouting in my mouth overnight as I slept.
ZIM+TEEMO


QÖMIX
BY CAESAR MEADOWS
Whiskers the Wistful
WHISKERS WAS A HOUSE CAT.
BORED WITH HIS LIFE INDOORS.
THOUGH ALL HIS BASIC NEEDS WERE MET...
...AS WELL AS GIVEN AFFECTION GALORE...
SCRITCH!
SCRITCH!
...HE LONGED FOR THE GREAT OUTDOORS.
LOAFING ON THE WARM WINDOW SILL...
...FORLORNLY GAZING THROUGH THE GLASS...
...TAKING IN A DAZZLING DREAMSCAPE...
...UP UNTIL NOW, DENIED HIM.
BUT TODAY WAS DIFFERENT!
TODAY HE WOULD NOT BE DENIED!
HE SHOT THROUGH A SUDDEN OPEN DOOR.
ZOOM!
GRRRRRRRRRRR..
GRRRRRR..
F*CK THIS!
THUS, WHISKERS WANDER-LUST WENT BUST.
PPPUUURRRRRRRR
END
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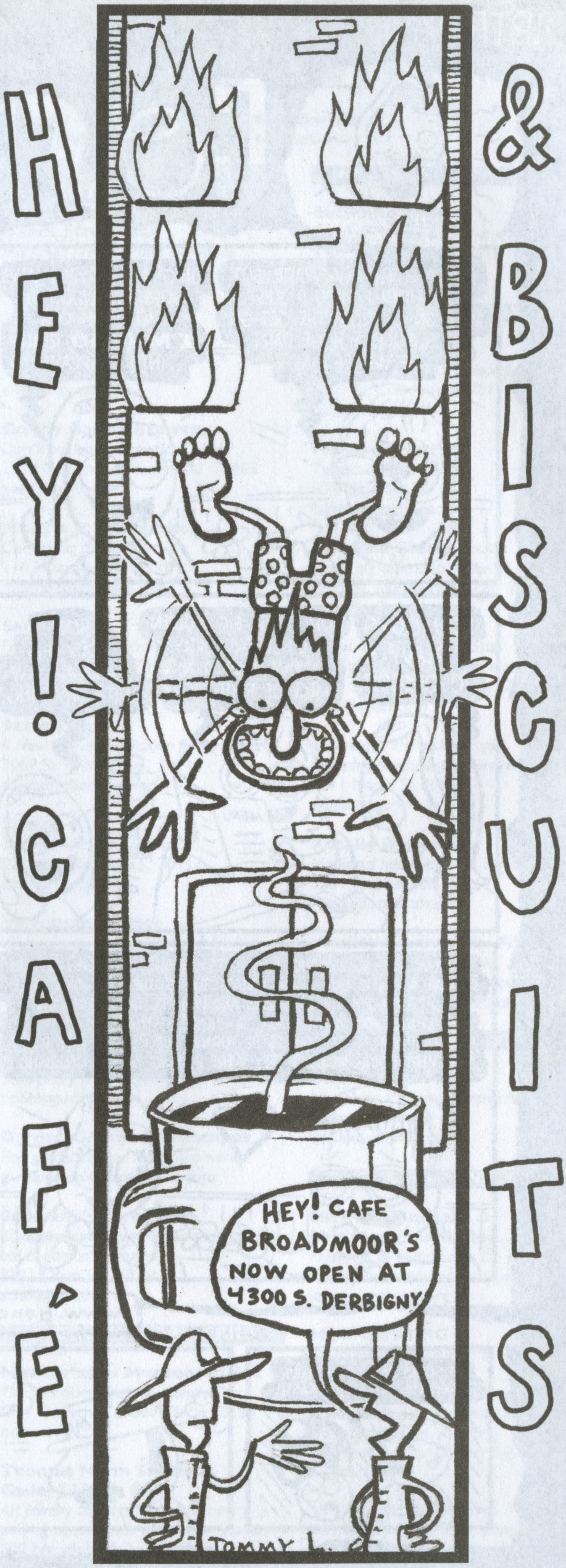
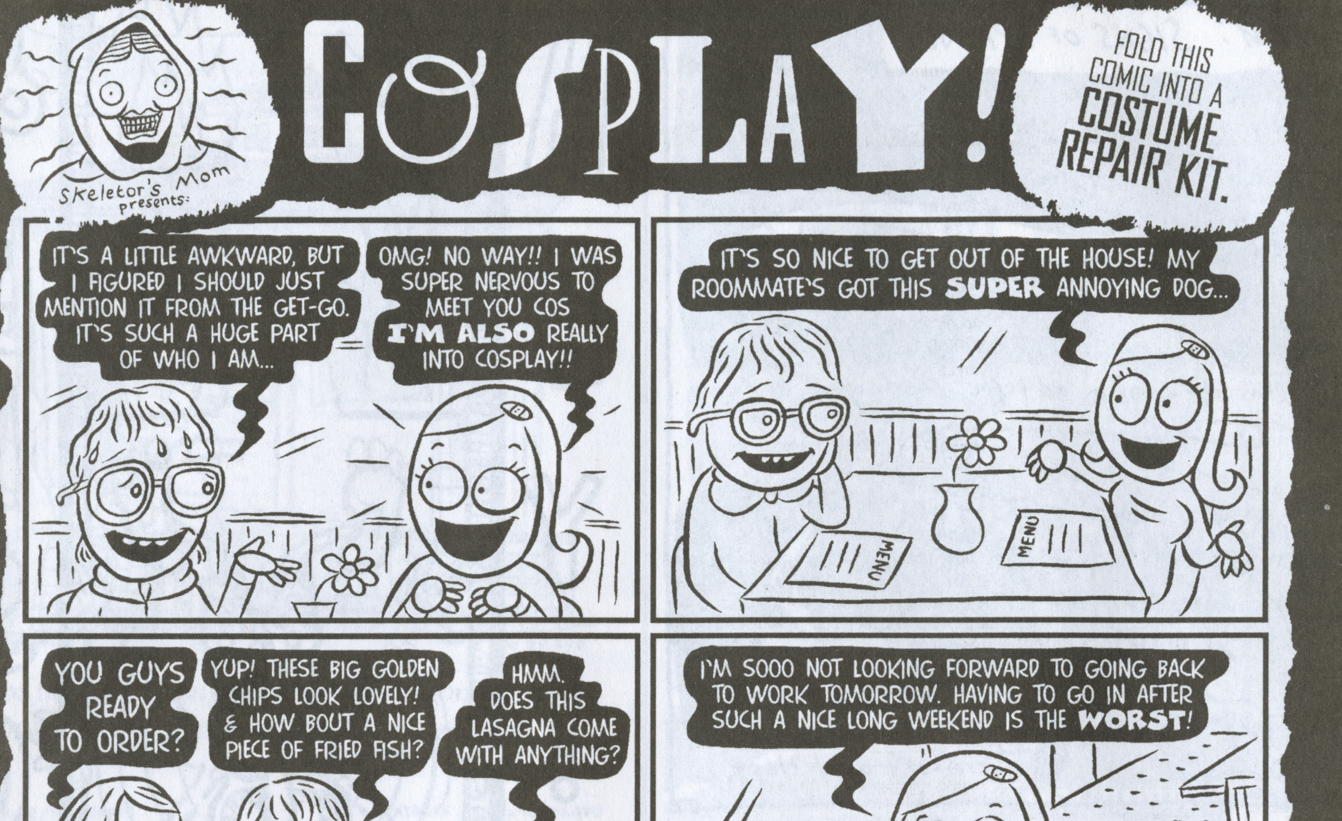

HEY! CAFE
& BISCUITS
HEY! CAFE BROADMOOR'S NOW OPEN AT 4300 S. DERBIGNY
TOMMY L.

DIRTFARM

Ben Claassen


Skeletor's Mom presents:
COSPLAY!
FOLD THIS COMIC INTO A COSTUME REPAIR KIT.
IT'S A LITTLE AWKWARD, BUT I FIGURED I SHOULD JUST MENTION IT FROM THE GET-GO. IT'S SUCH A HUGE PART OF WHO I AM...
OMG! NO WAY!! I WAS SUPER NERVOUS TO MEET YOU COS I'M ALSO REALLY INTO COSPLAY!!
IT'S SO NICE TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE! MY ROOMMATE'S GOT THIS SUPER ANNOYING DOG...
MENU
MENU
YOU GUYS READY TO ORDER?
YUP! THESE BIG GOLDEN CHIPS LOOK LOVELY! & HOW BOUT A NICE PIECE OF FRIED FISH?
HMM. DOES THIS LASAGNA COME WITH ANYTHING?
MENU
MENU
I'M SOOO NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO GOING BACK TO WORK TOMORROW. HAVING TO GO IN AFTER SUCH A NICE LONG WEEKEND IS THE WORST!
I KNOW. IT'S ALL WRONG. BY RIGHTS WE SHOULDN'T EVEN BE HERE. BUT WE ARE. IT'S LIKE IN THE GREAT STORIES. THE ONES THAT REALLY MATTERED. FULL OF DARKNESS AND DANGER, THEY WERE. AND SOMETIMES YOU DIDN'T WANT TO KNOW THE END. FOLK IN THOSE STORIES HAD LOTS OF CHANCES OF TURNING BACK, ONLY THEY DIDN'T. THEY KEPT GOING. BECAUSE THEY WERE HOLDING ON TO SOMETHING...

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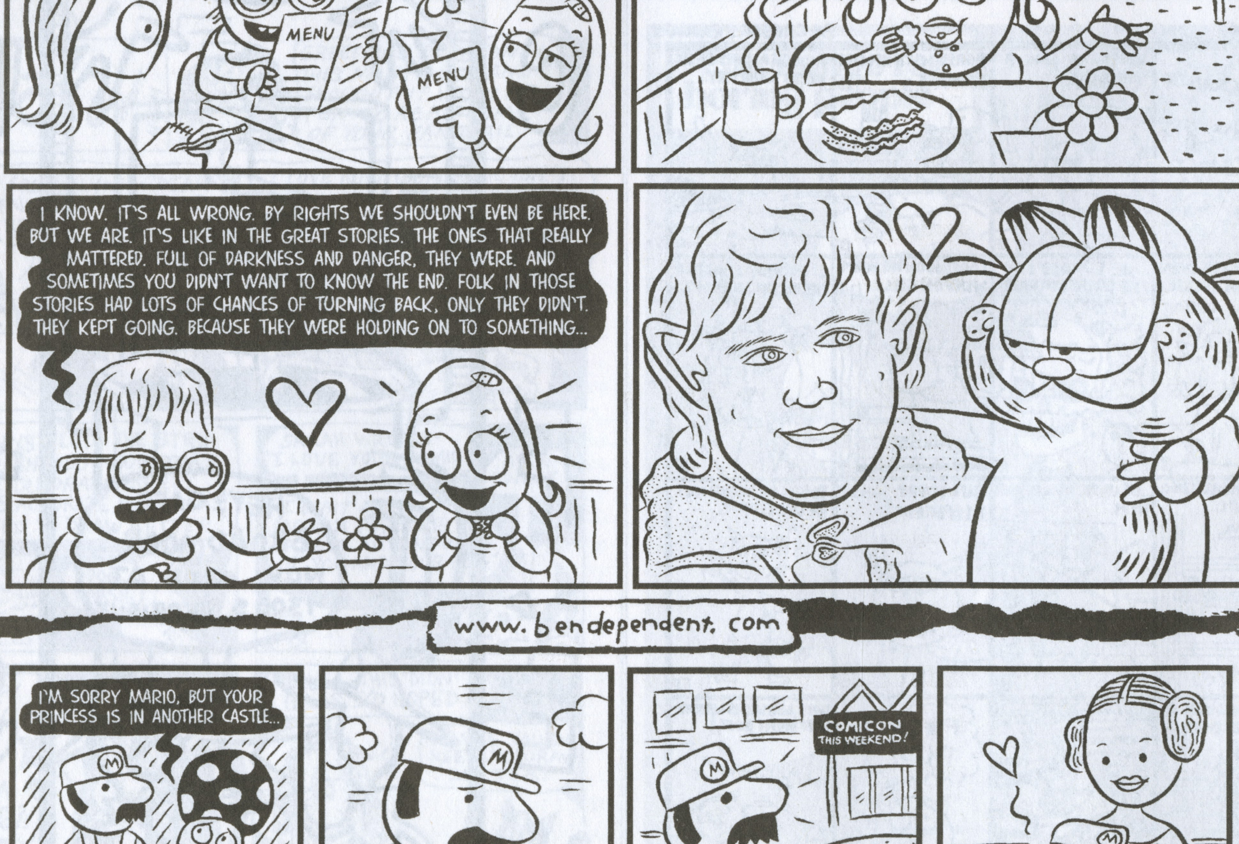
I'M SORRY MARIO, BUT YOUR PRINCESS IS IN ANOTHER CASTLE...
M
M
M
COMICON THIS WEEKEND!
M

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turkeyandthewolf.com

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norulesfashion.com

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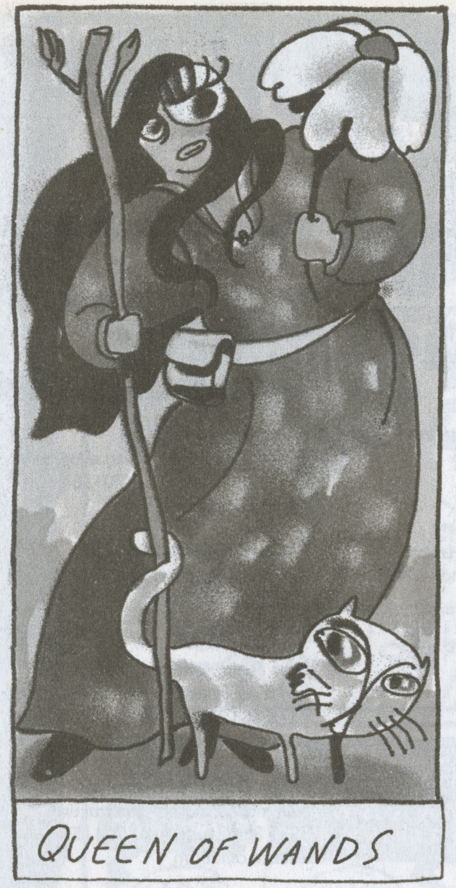

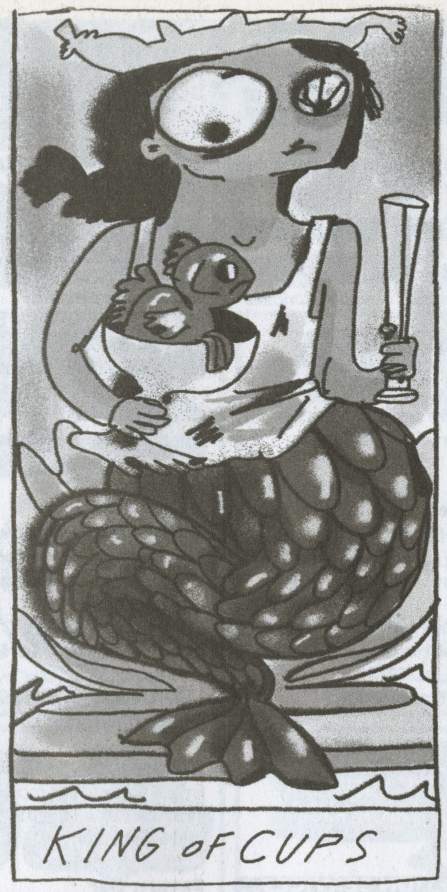

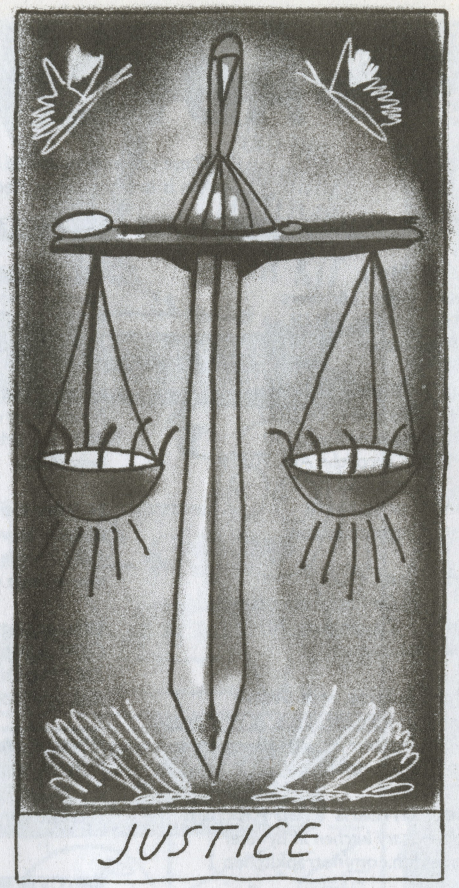

The spring season is greeted by one of her most compatible friends, The Queen of Wands. This is the most sensual and intuitive of all the Queens, who has plenty of ideas and energy. Give into her urgings. Let her be your confidence, your resilience, and your faith that you can overcome the obstacles you encounter. There are always obstacles, setbacks—Mercury going into retrograde—and there always will be. Life is an imperfect but worthwhile experience. The Queen of Wands keeps her eyes on the point on the horizon that guides the direction of her steps. What she knows with absolute clarity is that our goals can be as unruly as our nighttime dreams. Even if what we most want is fairly simple, it is unlikely to look the same in reality as it does in our expectations. What if getting the rest of the family to put the clean dishes away means changing the storage system rather than the people? Whether you are getting started on a project you hope will change your life, or you just want a little extra order, let The Queen of Wands bring your mood up around it. This is a plane of existence that includes toil, accident, and the unexpected—it is not punishment nor is it your fault. Look for what you can change in your own approach to making accomplishments that will incentivize others to want to partner with you.

> ***The King of Cups says that if we learn nothing else in life than to refrain from making other people responsible for how we feel, it will be a life well spent.***

The King of Cups is available to speak with us, if we make the effort to connect with him. This King will teach you how to hold your own feelings if you ask him and you stay respectful of his emotional space. Many among us will advance our happiness and our appeal as collaborators and partners by creating a consciousness around a specific emotional truth. It is possible for you to feel disappointed though no one let you down. It is possible to feel abandoned though nothing of the sort has happened. It is reflexive to always perceive our feelings as a direct reaction to input by other people and situations, but this is not always the case. Knowing the difference is the distinction between independence and what is often called codependency. The King of Cups says that if we learn nothing else in life than to refrain from making other people responsible for how we feel, it will be a life well spent.

We will know how well we balanced the needs and wisdom of the above cards, because Justice is going to show us the results using her scales. If the scales balance, we win her favor and she will shine a special light on us. When others see an image of Justice in you, their trust is easier to win and their willingness to advance you is heightened. We absorb so many thousands of messages reminding us to forgo all expectations of decency and fairness, we absolutely forget how to behave ourselves. We stop extending ourselves or trusting our ability to discern character or bounce back from the shock of finding out someone is not who we thought. Look for the best people and know that you will survive if someone turns out to be a little flaky. If our scales come up unbalanced, we will need to make an enormous effort for a less likely chance of success. But learn to balance desire and restraint this go-around and you'll be ready for the next challenge. With greater respect for our own time, we choose fewer hours spent in melancholia. May we know the gifts of Justice.

reading by Michelle Embree | michelleembree.com
illustration by Gurleen Rai | zimteemo.com

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